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by SAM MERWIN Jr.

**THE SEDULOUS
APES**

by DENNIS WIEGAND

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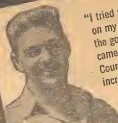
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Science Fiction QUARTERLY

ALL
STORIES
NEW

Volume 3

May, 1955

Number 5

FEATURED NOVEL

- THE EYE IN THE WINDOW** Sam Merwin, Jr. 6
 Senator Pearmain was sure that an alien plot was hatching in Nesi Wyndham's apartment building. He never dreamed how right he was, and how alien the aliens were!

SHORT STORIES

- THE SEDULOUS APES** Dennis Wiegand 37
 All of a sudden, a famous saying came true . . .
- YOU RISK YOUR LIFE** Joseph Slotkin 49
 This was the audience participation show that couldn't be topped!
- GLADSOME PLANET** Russ Winterbotham 60
 The administration of justice depends upon what is considered a crime.
- THE GUZZLER** ... Robert Abernathy 68
 What can be done about a licensed space pirate who hasn't broken any laws?
- THE RED AND THE GREEN** Joe L. Hensley 76
 The human race was in constant retreat, and I for one was tired of it.

READERS' DEPARTMENTS

- LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE-FICTION** (*Editorial*) R. W. Lowndes 47
- READIN' AND WRITHIN'** (*Book Reviews*) Damon Knight 57
- INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION** Robert A. Madle 65
- IT SAYS HERE** (*Letters and Comment*) 83

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THE EYE IN THE WINDOW

FEATURED NOVEL

Of Tomorrow's Intrigue

by Sam Merwin, Jr.

illustrated by KELLY FREAS

THE SECOND thing Joe Maturelli noticed about Canada Potts was her voice. As a young man who had spent a major portion of his thirty-three years embellishing a native talent for languages—he spoke seven fluently, had a working knowledge of five more—Joe found himself puzzled by her accent. He had never heard anything quite like it before.

The variations from conventional American or British Isles English dialect were not obvious. To a less

acute ear her, "I would like to see Miss Wyndham. I have a complaint to register," might have passed for well-bred young-woman speech—perhaps with a trace of accent retained from a Norse governess. But to Joe it was definitely alien.

The first thing Joe had noticed about Miss Potts was her looks; she was definitely what a certain type of Britisher calls a "smasher". She was tall for a girl but eminently well proportioned—delightfully ample where

girls ought to be ample, delightfully slim where they ought to be slim. Her garb was expensively simple and her face combined spirit, intelligence, and sensuality in a blend that, coupled with her figure, offered challenge to any man.

Wondering what combination of ethnics had bred this beauty, Joe replied "I'm afraid, Miss Potts, that Miss Wyndham is out of town until tomorrow. Is there anything I can do?"

She studied him briefly, then said, "I hope so—I've come to report a Peeping Tom and request that you have him stopped. It is most embarrassing." There was no trace of embarrassment in her speech or manner.

Joe indulged in some mental hand-rubbing. So Nesi Wyndham was keeping from him the knowledge that a dish—no, a full nine-course banquet—like Canada Potts, rented from the Wyndham Realty Corporation! It suggested to him that perhaps Nesi cared a little more about him than she had permitted him to know in years.

He said "If you'll just tell me where you live, and where this Peeping Tom is operating...?"

She said, "I live at 500 East 62nd Street. This—spy—is operating from a first-floor apartment across the street. The number is 503."

"Just a moment, please," said Joe; "excuse me." He had to cross in front of Miss Potts to get at the files. Five hundred East 62nd Street was not a familiar property. And, as he passed close to his lovely client, he noticed a third thing about her.

Her face, beneath its light coating of powder, was covered with a fine layer of sweat. This was almost as puzzling as her accent, for the weather outside was autumn-cool; and neither by deep breathing nor by disarrayed grooming did Miss Potts show any signs of having been running. Actually, in a blue Irish-linen suit, she was dressed lightly for the day.

That Joe did not know the 500 house was not in itself remarkable; the Wyndham Estate in Manhattan was almost as far-flung as that of Vincent Astor. In his scant year of employment as Nesi Wyndham's realty assistant, Joe was well aware that he had absorbed mentally only a fraction of her complex inheritance. Furthermore, Nesi had an annoying way of keeping a lot of the reins in her own hands exclusively.

This minor mystery was explained when he found the file card in the "wholly rented" category. Apparently it had held no vacancies for a number of years. He said, for something to say, "Have you been living there long, Miss Potts?"

She made an odd graceful-awkward gesture, said, "Not long—a mere five months. I have a job with the U. N."

If she had moved in so recently, he thought, he ought to know about her—but he didn't. He decided again that Nesi was doing her best to keep him segregated from such as Miss Potts and his male ego expanded accordingly. He said, "Very well. Miss Potts. Suppose I go up there with you now and see what the situation is. Then I can call in the police to deal with it."

"Not the police," she told him firmly but quietly. "My job requires the greatest discretion. I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to deal with this—trouble-maker—on a more personal level."

"Could he really be a spy?" Joe asked. Then, at the scorn of her look, "I mean, with your job at the U. N. demanding discretion and all, I thought..."

"It's hardly likely," she told him. "Come along, then; I have a cab waiting outside."

Joe turned over the office to an aide, put on his hat, and went out with Miss Potts. She sat in her corner of the cab, refusing a cigaret and all conversational gambits. Yet, once or twice, he

received a definite impression that she was studying him covertly, almost hungrily, during the six-block ride from office to apartment. He wondered what the hell, decided Miss Potts was a definite oddball.

FIVE HUNDRED East 62nd Street proved to be a trim glass-brick and gleaming metal building, no larger than a fair-sized millionaire's mansion of pre-Depression vintage. It featured big picture windows and, from its east front, overlooked the River Drive. It was only four stories high. Joe wondered how it could possibly show a profit, decided it must be some special pet project of Nesi's.

He paid off the cabby and followed Miss Potts through a heavy modern bronze front door. Inside, the foyer was more like that of a private dwelling than of an apartment house. It featured soft grey carpeting, warm indirect lighting, casual and costly furniture. He noticed that Miss Potts was still perspiring gently.

He said, "I think I ought to talk to the super first, if you don't mind, Miss Potts." He wondered how she had ever come by such a sorely undescriptive surname.

She shrugged her shoulders, an act that did interesting things to the rest of her, and said, "Very well, if that's the proper form; but Bill doesn't know anything. I'll await you in my apartment." She moved toward a closed door to their right, which bore the single gilt initial *A*.

He finally found the superintendent in the basement, stretched out on someone's discarded chaise lounge with his hands folded behind the nape of his neck, listening to Polish music on a small radio. His name, it developed, was Bill Matchek, and he looked vaguely like Bull Montana of the old silent movies.

It didn't take two interchanges of dialogue for Joe to discover that he had

misunderstood Miss Potts' remark about Bill's not knowing anything. Joe had taken it to mean that the superintendent was unacquainted with the problem of the Peeping Tom. Now, it became evident, Bill knew nothing about anything; he was, thought Joe, the stupidest human being he had ever met—and he had met some prize examples in the course of his thirty-three years.

He discovered that even the basement had a picture window, which looked out on the street. Its view was marred by the fact that much of it was below sidewalk level, was further marred by protective bars. He peered through it at Number 503 across the street. Overhead he could hear Miss Potts or somebody moving around.

"You work for Miss Wyndham?" the superintendent asked, eyeing him with overt suspicion.

"I do," replied Joe for the third time. He produced his business-identification cards from an alligator-skin billfold and offered them for Matchek's inspection. The superintendent studied them with a painful scowl, rubbing a near-shaven head with his free hand. Finally he handed them back.

"I guess you're okay," he said. "What do you want?"

"Tell you when I find out more about it," Joe told him. This equivocal reply seemed to satisfy Matchek, who relapsed onto his couch. He turned up the volume on a polka as Joe got out of there.

As Joe emerged from the basement, the door of Apartment *A* opened; a man came out and walked across the soft grey carpeting toward the handsome bronze-doored elevator at the rear of the foyer. At least, Joe *thought* it was a man.

Three o'clock in the afternoon was an odd hour to be dressed for a masquerade ball; and television performers, as far as Joe knew, got into and out of costume in studio dressing

rooms. Yet this man was clad in a bright-red devil's costume, over which he wore a pair of pale pongee shorts. His tail protruded from a slit in the rear and was coiled gracefully about his left wrist. This detail reminded Joe inevitably of Stephen Vincent Benet's story about the King of the Cats.

As this somewhat flamboyant character brushed past him, Joe noted that, outside of the absurd shorts, the costume was remarkably well-made. It was impossible to tell, even at a distance of less than one foot, where the costume ended around the head and the face began. He might have decided the stranger wore a mask—except that, as he went by, his satanic countenance crinkled in an apologetic smile and he murmured, "Excuse me."

His eyes, while mild in expression, were red as rubies.

Joe decided, as he stared at the quietly-closing elevator doors, that the masquerade must have occurred the night before, and that, in view of the bright red eyes, he was gazing at the great granddaddy of all hangovers. *Poor devil!* he thought.

He decided to say nothing at all about it to Miss Potts.

She called a, "Come in," to his knock; the door was unbolted.

SHE WAS standing to one side of the picture window in her living room, concealed by gay cream-colored drapes adorned with gilded unicorns, blue griffons and crimson dragons in gay profusion. She beckoned to Joe and said, "Come over here and see for yourself."

He marveled anew at the charming amplitude of her figure in all the right places; and saw, as he took up a position beside her, that she was still sweating. It occurred to him that, if she had been out with the hungover Beelzebub he had just seen leaving her apartment, she must have a hangover, too—which would explain her extraordinary per-

spiration. A pang of jealousy assailed him as he inhaled the dry allure of the expensive scent she favored. Either its odor blanketed the perspiration, or the perspiration itself was odorless.

She said, "*There!* Do you see?"—He forced his mind back to business.

Number 503 did not feature picture windows. It was a reclaimed tenement building whose reclamation seemed to consist chiefly of a new and lurid coat of yellow paint. Fire escapes cascaded down its bilious facade like pigeon droppings down the statue of General Sherman in the Plaza.

Joe's gaze followed the direction of an elegantly manicured Potts forefinger toward a ground-floor window directly opposite. At first glance, it appeared facelessly dark and he had to squint to make out what this disturbing young woman wished him to see. A pair of dirty lace curtains across the way did nothing to help him.

Finally, however, he was able to make out a pair of small circles which appeared to rest almost side-by-side on the window sill. He peered twice more to make sure, then withdrew and retired to the depths of the living room. He said, "You must have remarkably good eyesight, Miss Potts. Not one person in a thousand could have spotted them."

"You saw, then?" she asked, turning to face him expectantly.

"I saw what looks like a pair of fieldglasses aimed at this building," he told her. He lit a cigaret, offered her one, which was refused, and added, "I still think the wisest move would be to let the police handle it."

"That is out of the question," was the prompt reply in Miss Potts' elusive accent. *Finnish?* he wondered. *No, too drawled, and with improper diphthongs. Perhaps some obscure Eastern European local dialect.* Joe felt like a devout cryptographer, confronted with some new and unfamiliar code; he would not

rest easy until he had solved it. Yet it would spoil the game to ask.

"In that case," he told her. "I'll have to consult Nesi—Miss Wyndham. She'll have to decide what to do." After all, he knew nothing whatever about these people. They might be under some sort of investigation—and he had no desire to get snarled up in anything of that nature. Certainly they were eccentric enough, Matchek included.

Miss Potts looked troubled—even angry. She said, "But I want action directly. And if Miss Wyndham is out of town until tomorrow..."

Joe took pity on her—she was scarcely a creature with whom he could enjoy being obdurate. *And what was that accent—Lombard?* No. He said, "Miss Wyndham won't be in the office until tomorrow. Actually, she'll be back in town sometime late this afternoon or tonight; I'll see if I can't get hold of her about this."

"If you will be so kind," was the reply. "I am very distressed that such a thing should happen at all."

Joe suppressed barely in time a, "By this time you ought to be used to it, honeychile." He said, "Well, that's the best I can do," and wished Miss Potts would drop her hauteur. It simply didn't go with the sensuality of her lip-and-nostril pattern.

Without warning, she dropped it. Joe felt her arms slip under his, felt himself pulled close against that magnificent female figure. Soft lips met his full on and seemed to devour them and other interesting things began to happen with appalling suddenness.

For a moment, he was much too startled to respond. The transition was too abrupt, too violent, too complete. And then he managed to murmur, "Miss Potts—Canada—*darling!*"—and got into the fight.

the suddenly and somewhat overwhelmingly amorous Miss Potts and looked around. There was nothing to see but the room, no one visible but himself and Miss Potts. Joe decided someone must have looked in, seen them and beat a hurried retreat. He hoped, fugitively, that it wasn't the hungover man in the red devil suit. That one seemed to have enough to trouble him, if his red eyes were a true index, without finding his girl in another man's arms moments after leaving her himself.

Abruptly, however, Miss Potts pulled free of him. She said, over his shoulder, something in a language utterly unlike any he had ever heard before. It sounded, to his appalled ears, like duck-talk with a vaguely English accent. Usually, he could pick out word patterns, even in totally alien tongues; but this seemed to rely more on intonation, like certain of the Chinese dialects, than on words. It was strangely musical—musical in a haunting way which suggested that some of its tones were inaudible to his ears.

"Who are you talking to?" he asked sharply.

The answer came from behind him, in the same weird non-cacophony, cast in a high twittering pitch. Duck-talk, delivered by a canary with a Tokyo accent, he thought.

He continued to stare blankly around him at the room. Whoever was with them appeared to have found a damned good hiding place; or else... He found it was his turn to sweat. And then, mercifully, he recalled that there were such things as microphones and amplifiers and house broadcasting systems. He eyed a large white water lily on a low oval table just to the left of the door. If a mike *were* planted in this room, that would be the spot for it.

All at once, he realized that Miss Potts was speaking to him—speaking to him with no trace of the sudden burst of affection she had just shown him, speaking to him as imperiously

HE DID NOT hear the door behind him open, but he did hear it slam shut. Startled, he pulled half-free of

as an Empress of old. She was saying, "Please—you must leave at once, Mr. Maturelli."

Joe pulled himself together hurriedly, reached for his hat. He said, "Thanks for the lipstick, Miss Potts. And I'll do what I can to get in touch with Miss Wyndham immediately."

"Do so," was the curt reply.

He headed toward the door, feeling like a schoolboy who had just been properly cuffed for dipping into the school candy supply. Then his native pride rallied and, along with it, something close to anger. No woman, no dame, no lady, was going to push him around so.

Just before he reached the door, he swerved toward the table with its pond lily in the wide bowl. If there were a microphone planted beneath it, he, as Nesi Wyndham's agent, had a right to know...

Behind him, he heard Miss Potts' startled gasp.

Then he collided with a solid yielding something that emitted an unmistakable animal grunt of surprise. Before he could gather scattered wits, Joe uttered a reflex, "Oops, excuse me."

To which, the nothing in front of him replied in piping but excellent English, "Certainly."

He got the hell out of there in a tearing hurry.

2



JOE DID NOT feel up to making a return to the office. Instead he walked, not ran, seven blocks downtown and one-and-a-half west to a pleasantly dim sanctuary whose neon sign, in the shape of an heraldic shield,

proclaimed it to be *The Bar Sinister*. There he found a certain comfort in a

double scotch mist and in the companionship of Stan Wilder, to whom he narrated what had just happened to him.

"It was like being trapped in a Charles Addams cartoon," he concluded. "When I bumped into—whatever the hell I *did* bump into, I got the damndest impression of being grabbed by two pairs of hands." He shivered, added, "*Brother!* What a thing to go through!"

Wilder leaned against the blond bar and looked down on Joe's five-eleven from the eminence of his own six-three. He drawled, "Skipping the Coney Island fun-house elements of this ridiculous story of yours, Guiseppi, it does contain points of interest. You say this babe lives at 500 East 62nd and works at the U. N.? Does she have a sort of double widow's peak?" And, at Joe's nod, "And does she walk with an odd little sway like this?" Putting down his glass Wilder did a near-perfect imitation of Canada Potts in motion.

"You know her?" Joe asked, astonished.

"Not yet," said Wilder with unmistakable emphasis; "but she's been walking by my place to and from work for months now." He rolled his eyes, licked his lips, made a slurping sound. "Even if your chick is a mere reasonable facsimile, I want."

"Hey!" said Joe in mild alarm. "She's a tenant; if you think I'm going to set her up for you, you're crazy."

"I may be crazy but I'm not as crazy as you—yet," Wilder told him cheerfully. "Invisible men with four arms!" He peered at Joe closely. "I'm beginning to think I'd better put in a call for the men with white suits and two arms each."

"Forget it," said Joe with a sigh. "The only thing crazy about me is telling this to you."

They bickered amiably, with the licence of old acquaintances. Stan Wilder was a huge tawny Californian

of about Joe's age. He had gone to a West Coast college on a football scholarship, taken a dislike to the head coach and soured that worthy permanently by getting his degree—and a Phi Beta Kappa key—in three years, thus depriving the team of his services during his senior season.

He had flown a carrier-based rescue helicopter off Korea until a well-placed piece of flak had retired him from the service with a disability pension that promised to keep him in hamburgers and coffee the rest of his life—a pension which he managed to hoist into the steaks and old fashioned class, thanks to a nose for occasional profitable deals. He was, in his genial fashion, a thoroughly successful and hard-working Metropolitan wolf.

Thanks to his prodding, Joe was still discussing the various attractions of Miss Canada Potts when Marta Crane came in, swinging her model's hatbox, and stood behind him. He was unaware of her presence until she said, in her flat, unexpectedly attractive girl-of-Manhattan accent, "So I suppose you're going to set up light house-keeping with her?"

Joe jumped and barely managed not to upset the drink in front of him. Marta possessed a number of notably good points, among them a willingness to be his girl—but she possessed a number of not-so-good ones as well, including a fierce possessive jealousy. He turned slowly, mustering himself for the battle to come.

But Stan moved quickly into the breach, with, "Don't snap your garter belt, honey; Joe's merely describing a setup he's rigging for me. Aren't you, Joe?"

JOE KNEW when he was licked. He said, "That's right, honey. She walked right into the office and Stan's been ogling her for months. How about a drink, doll?"

"If you think I came in here to dis-

cuss the weather, you're out of your mind," replied Marta, looking more than usual like a jungle cat under her green eyeshadow. She perched herself on a stool between the two men. "Gahd, what a day!" she exclaimed, accepting the martini the bartender put before her. "Thanks, Mike." And, to Joe and Stan, "That damned fool Gerhardt set up the pose nineteen times—count 'em, nineteen!—and then decided not to shoot till tomorrow."

"You should worry at fifteen dollars an hour," said Stan.

"Twenty." Marta corrected him sharply.

"Marry me, darling," Stan said promptly; "we could make beautiful bebop together."

Marta gave him a long low look. Then she said "Don't be facetious, you fine-feathered ape. Marriage to you would be like being the brass ring on a merry-go-round—only good for a free ride."

"Hey! I was only joking," said Stan.

"A hell of a thing to joke about," said Marta.

Stan said, "Joe, when do I get to meet this dream gal?"

"You know where she lives," Joe told him; "You're on your own."

"Fine thing," said Stan. "After all I've done for you..."

"For me or to me?" Joe countered. Then, to Marta, "I'd like to have seen Stan's face if you'd said yes."

"Why don't you ask me?" Marta countered; and somehow Joe knew she wasn't entirely kidding.

He captured her near hand and said, "Honey, trap your millionaire first. Then, when you've made your kill, I'll propose; unlike Stan, I don't have a disability pension."

Marta pulled her hand free and cuffed at him. She said, to Stan, "I think Joe's depraved—honestly!"

"You should know," Stan informed her.

"Merely trying to be realistic," said Joe, masking his inner relief at turning the conversation away from Canada Potts. All at once he remembered he was supposed to call Nesi Wyndham about the Peeping Tom. He glanced at his wristwatch, saw it was getting close to six o' clock, turned away—and found himself face-to-face with the object of his intended call.

Joe had known Nesi Wyndham for twenty-nine of his thirty-three years, had been in love with her for twelve of them. Nesi, born Agnes, with a built-in aversion to being called Aggie, was a perfect pint-sized Aphrodite. The top of her silver-red head came barely to the point of Joe's chin, even when she wore high heels; yet when the mood was upon her she could tower like a giantess by the mere power of her personality.

She was towering just then—in a simple black-wool dress that managed to suggest the excellence of her figure without throwing it at the onlooker, as did Marta's saffron tweed suit. Her usually softcut just off-cute features were steeled by an expression that seemed to Joe to be made up of equal parts of concern and anger. She said, in the casually clipped accents achieved by a very few of the very rich, "Joe, they told me at the office I'd find you here." There was a definite trace of contempt in her tone.

"I was just going to phone you," Joe told her. "There's a beef from 500 East 62nd about a Peeping Tom."

"I know," Nesi said evenly. "They just called and told me about it; if your friends will excuse you..."

"Right, Nesi," he said, wondering why this scant hundred pounds of female could reduce him to such quivering male obedience.

"Hey!" cried Marta, who had been eyeing the dialogue with her head cocked slightly to one side, looking like a cobra preparing to strike. "You're taking me to dinner tonight, Joe."

"Stan will take care of you, honey—won't you, Stan?"

"A pleasure." The big ex-Californian began to glow with anticipation. "By the way, Joe..." He eyed Nesi inquiringly.

"Oh!" Joe regathered his manners, made the introduction. Then he got out of there with Nesi, before Marta could swing into action. She had long been suspicious of Joe's relations with his employer, and he had been at pains to explain that Nesi was not a girl any man in his right mind could fall for. Marta would be recalling such misleading statements once the initial shock wore off.

"Where to?" he asked when they reached the sidewalk.

Nesi frowned briefly, delightfully, while she made up her mind. Then she said, "There's such a lot to explain—and I have a dinner date at the *Tangier* with Dion Pearmain. Better go to your place. It's handier."

JOE'S TWO-AND-A-HALF-ROOM apartment lay halfway between *The Bar Sinister* and the Wyndham Realty office. It was an odd bachelor melange, containing a few magnificent Italian renaissance pieces and paintings, alongside second-hand, worn but comfortable chairs and sofa of various periods, picked up at auctions, and grocery-store-calendar nudes. Its bookshelves were stuffed with gold-leafed editions of Shakespeare, Racine, Moliere and Goethe (mostly unread) and Modern Library editions (dog-eared), along with a gay scattering of modern book-jackets. The mantel was crammed with Napoleonic soldiers in various stages of disrepair, the tables with lamps, ashtrays that served as coasters, coasters that served as ashtrays, magazines, both American and European, and a number of toby jugs of astonishing ugliness.

Nesi looked at the mixture as Joe turned on the lights and her belligerence melted. She moved to an ancient

refectory table under the twin casement windows against the far wall and ran a forefinger over the dull satin blackness of its surface. "Oh, Joe," she murmured "I remember this—it's from the Fiesole Villa."

"It's about all they got out of it when one of our planes hit it dead center with a 500-pounder in '44," he told her. Then, "Hey! That's right—it's your first visit here. Shall I break out the Old Grandad Moet Chandon?"

"That beautiful, beautiful villa!" Nesi sighed. Then, shaking herself out of it, "Not now, Joe. We're going to need our wits."

"I always said drinking takes half the fun out of it," said Joe, wondering why Nesi made him set so sophomoric.

"Joe!" she said warningly. It reminded him of a Westchester Kennel Club lady ordering her prize pup to heel. "Don't you *ever* think of anything else?"

"Around you, that would be an insult," he told her. "After that weekend in Southampton before I went overseas..."

"Joe!" she said again, more sharply. "You promised, when you came to work for me, not to mention that—that, well..." A slow pink blush raised charming havoc with her careful facial color scheme.

He took a step toward her but she sat down resolutely and said, "Joe, I didn't want you to know about 500 East 62nd Street."

"So I gathered when Miss Potts turned up this afternoon."

She frowned and said, "It was sheer bad luck, my being out of reach." Then, "Tell me everything that happened."

He did so, omitting only the embrace. Nesi heard him out and then said, "Joe, what was your impression of the whole business?"

He thought it over, told her, "Either that I was crazy or the whole

bunch of *them* were. What goes on up there anyway?"

She hesitated, then said, "Joe, I'm going to have to tell you. When I'm through, your first thought will probably be that I am out of my mind. Let me assure you now that I'm not. Tell me—you're so good at languages—what did you make of Miss Potts' accent?"

"I'm still trying to trace it," he admitted. "Do you know?"

"I know," said Nesi. "Miss Potts—which is not her real name, by the way—comes from Mars."

Joe upset one of the toby jugs, stooped to pick it up. If anyone but Nesi had said it, he'd have suspected a rib; but Nesi was probably the most sincere and straightforward person he had ever met. Still, he said, "You're not kidding?"

"I'm not kidding," she replied and her voice, like her expression was deadly serious.

He did some rapid-fire thinking, adjusting, said, "That accent—hmmm. And the way she kept sweating. Hell, it's cold on Mars—even a zero day there would be like June to us." He paused, eyed Nesi, added, "And how about my friend, the hungover devil?"

"He usually wears a disguise," she said. "His name here is Anatol Drayne and he comes from Venus. His skin color is caused by the fact that the cloud layer covering his native planet does not filter but intensifies the rays of the sun; all Venerians are red."

"Why the tail?" Joe asked, operating on reflexes alone.

Nesi said matter-of-factly, "Much of Venus is rocky desert by our standards and the winds are constant and heavy; they need their tails to latch onto the rocks and keep from being blown away."

"I see," said Joe, wishing he either had had nothing to drink or that he had another in his hand. "And what about my invisible man with the four arms?"

"He's from Titan, a moon of Saturn," she replied. "They need invisibility out there—something to do with the refraction effect of living so close to an immense gasbag like Saturn. It's more than an illusion, of course—I think it has something to do with induced curvature of light. It takes a polarized lens to photograph them. They're—very odd. Almost inhuman."

"But what are they doing *here*?" he asked a trifle desperately. "And how are *you* tangled up with them?"

"That's a long story." She accepted a cigaret gratefully, paused while he lit it for her. "I'll try to give you a quick briefing." She paused again, added, "Joe, I think I'm glad you fell into it today. It's tremendous load to carry—and I've had to carry it alone a lot of the time. It's simply too risky to let more than a handful of people in on it. Besides, with your gift for languages..."

"What was that ducktalk I heard them using?" he asked her.

"You mean this?" Nesi embarked on an extraordinary succession of sounds.

Joe said, "That's it—what *is* it?"

"Interplanetary lingua franca," she told him. Then, "Joe, I inherited the job of being New York Representative for the Interplanetary Hanse. My grandfather—remember him?—held it before me. Dad never knew about it, of course; he wasn't the type."

JOE RECALLED Nesi's father, an extraordinarily charming wastrel who had run blithely through five official marriages and heaven only knew how many unofficial ones. No, he would hardly have been the type for important responsibility. But Nesi's grandfather Wyndham—*there*, had been a fine rugged old Victorian, who had drunk his daily bottle of brandy and gone on making his millions and riding his jumpers right up to his final illness at the age of 84.

"Grandfather really trained me for the job," she went on. "You see, there has been undercover trade with other planets going on for more than two centuries. They've been visiting Earth regularly for thousands of years to check on progress—but any real basis for regular dealings has existed only since the Age of Reason in France.

"At first they picked their human agents from among scientists who could understand their needs, and princes who had the power to fulfill them. Franklin, Lavoisier, Frederick the Great, people like that. Then, with the rise of the industrial age—which they helped promote, by the way—certain private businessmen seemed to offer both greater security and efficiency. Grandfather was one of those they selected; he passed the job along to me."

"Good God!" said Joe, frankly appalled. "But how come this isn't a two-way deal? Why can't we visit their home planets?"

"We're not ready," Nesi replied promptly. And, when he opened his mouth to protest, "Joe, we can't even think globally. We regard anyone who suggests surrendering even a fragment of national sovereignty—in the name of world union—as a traitor. What do you think our reaction would be to taking orders from an interplanetary council?"

Joe winced. "A point," he said. "Still, disregarding a lot of things I haven't asked—about how they travel and land secretly and what sort of business they do—haven't they taken any Earthfolk back with them?"

"A few," she replied. "Now and then someone is needed to help an installation or nurse a plant growth under alien conditions. But there's a hitch—once you leave, you can't come back; it's—a security measure. But some disappearances..."

"I see," he said, though his thoughts were still whirling in pinwheel fashion. "No wonder they don't like the idea of

a Peeping Tom; and no wonder they don't want the police. What do you want me to do about that by the way?"

"Nothing—yet," she replied firmly. "I'm dining with Senator Pearmain tonight—I told you about it. I have a hunch he may be able to help out."

"I wouldn't trust that hard-shelled demagogue as far as I could throw him," Joe told her. "Why waste time with him?"

Nesi, who had risen, dropped her blue eyes demurely, toyed with a fold of her skirt. She said, "The Senator—Dion—is interested; but a satyr like you wouldn't understand that."

"It's because I *do* understand it I'm worried," he replied.

"And I'm late," she said. "Be a good boy, Joe—for once; we can talk it all over tomorrow."

3



HEN NESI had gone, Joe made a moody raid on his own kitchen. Probably, he thought, he ought to return to *The Bar Sinister* and extricate Marta from whatever web Stan Wilder was endeavoring to weave

about her. But his current frame of mind was wholly out of key with the ribaldries and superficialities such a move would entail.

He poured himself a glass of milk, cut a slice of ham and placed a rectangle of processed cheddar on either side of it. And, as he munched on it, he considered the implications of what had happened to him, what he had learned, since Canada Potts walked into his office that afternoon.

Sweating ladies from Mars, red devils from Venus, invisible men from Titan, undercover interplanetary trade—and the threat of a Peeping Tom. It

was, he decided, rinsing out his milk glass, too much to take in at one gulp. He wondered if the whole business weren't some sort of a gigantic rib.

He poured some brandy into an old fashioned glass and returned to the living room. To give himself some tie with the familiar, he snapped on the television and tried to listen to Perry Como and the Fontaine Sisters. But if the inmates of 500 East 62nd Street were too alien to grasp, Perry Como was too familiar, too homely, for his current mood.

Although Nesi Wyndham was, in many ways, an enigma to him, Joe *knew* that she would never lend herself to any sort of a practical joke. It simply wasn't in her. Which meant that either her story was true, or she herself was the victim of some sort of swindle—and Nesi had far too much inherited acumen to fall for such a caper.

He decided to presuppose for the moment that Nesi was telling the truth. In which case, it was scarcely surprising that she had been unresponsive to one Joe Maturelli since his return from the wars. The load she was carrying on her tiny shoulders was enough to flatten the massive deltoids of an Atlas.

He sipped his Armagnac and decided that his ego was eliding at least a portion of the truth. Nesi knew he had been in love with her since prep-school prom and summer-vacation days. And, that one weekend in Southampton, just before he had gone overseas with the OSS, she had surprised and delighted him with her sudden and complete surrender. Since then, nothing.

He wondered if her viewpoint had changed because he had lost his money. There was, after all, a slight difference between Guiseppi Smith Maturelli Colonna-Sforza, Conti di Mazarino-Vanza, with inherited properties on both sides of the Atlantic—and Joe

Maturelli, realty agent with a dribbling pittance from the shattered remnants of a trust fund he was not even allowed to touch.

But his reasoning was false and he knew it. Nesi was not that sort of a snob. If she loved a man she would love him, no matter what his estate. All at once he found himself envisioning the rugged hoorah-handsome face of Senator Dion Pearmain, idol of the stupid-rich, the bigoted and the ignorant, his prematurely snow-white locks close to Nesi's gorgeous silver-red tresses across a snowy tablecloth in the flatteringly dim lights of the *Tan-gier*.

The thought was more than he could bear—as was the inactive role to which Nesi had relegated him. A sudden irresistible yearning to do something, anything, overwhelmed the indolence he had been cultivating carefully for years. When Nesi took him to task for his lack of ambition, it was his custom to say, "Don't worry, Nesi—I'm lying fallow for a while. One of these days..."

He was lying fallow no longer.

OUTSIDE, he sniffed the Indian Summer night air, enjoying its warmth and its underlying hint of cold weather ahead. He felt alive as he had not felt since those almost forgotten wartime days when he had lived dangerously, moment by moment, on missions behind the Nazi lines. He walked rapidly north to 62nd Street.

Unconsciously, thanks to his OSS training, Joe had registered a number of details about the yellow converted tenement that had sheltered the Peeping Tom that afternoon. There had been a familiar sort of narrow areaway running along the west side of the building, an areaway which would, he surmised from his familiarity with Manhattan real estate, run to the rear of the building.

It did. Joe found himself standing

amid ash barrels (7) and vocally amorous cats (2). In front of him was the ebon rectangle of a basement back door. As he suspected, it was unlocked; such a warren was seldom a target for burglars. Joe entered, felt around for a light cord, turned it on, made his way to the dingy stairway that led up to the first floor.

There, quick study informed him that the railroad flats, on either side of the hallway which split the building in two, ran all the way from front to rear. He went to the back, opened a dust-opaque window, climbed out onto a narrow ledge he had spotted from below. The window—the back window—of the Peeping Tom's apartment was both open and dark. He slid through it silently, discovered himself to be in a bedroom of sorts, dimly lit by a light somewhere in the midriff of the apartment.

Mercifully someone had laid linoleum over much of the floor so that Joe was able to move forward toward his objective—without risking the betrayal of creaky floorboards. He passed through a kitchen, another bedroom, a sort of foyer—where the green-shaded light dangled sadly from the ceiling on a cord—found the door to the front chamber closed.

It would be, he thought—no Peeping Tom could risk being spotted in a lighted room, and there would be enough light from the street outside to offer visibility. Joe found the foyer light-string, pulled it, felt his way forward through the sudden darkness. At the closed door, he paused a moment to let his eyes adjust.

Somewhere upstairs, a baby suddenly began to howl. A man cursed and a woman began denouncing him shrilly. Under cover of this welcome noise, Joe pushed the door open and slipped inside.

The watcher was there, all right, standing at the window, studying the 500 house across the street. Canada

Potts' Venetian blinds were tightly drawn, as was the only other lighted window in the building, save for Bill Matchek's basement. Joe wondered what in hell the man was watching for. He determined to find out.

He moved forward swiftly, silently—and fell headlong, with a tremendous clatter, over some obstruction on the floor.

The next few moments were a trifle confused. The watcher swung about before he could rise, tried to brain him with his fieldglasses. Joe, up on one knee, deflected the blow with a forearm, managed to trip his startled assailant so that they rolled about on the floor.

JOE, WHO knew considerable about judo, thanks to his wartime training, found himself up against another expert. If the uproar of his otherwise inglorious extrance had not put the watcher off-balance, he would have been out of luck. As it was, he managed to pin his man quite effectively in a hold which would result in a broken arm if the fellow moved.

The man said through pain-gritted teeth, "*Carissima—Jesu!*"

Joe said, "For gossakes, Paddy Locke!"

Somehow they were back in the foyer, with the light on, blinking foolishly at one another. Paddy Locke said, "Joe Maturelli—goddam! Where in hell did you spring from?" He was a black-haired chunky individual, half-Irish, half-Italian; he and Joe had worked a couple of missions around Florence for the OSS during the war.

Joe said, "Got a complaint about a Peeping Tom from across the street; I never thought it was you. What gives, anyway?"

"You still got it, Joe," said Paddy, working his arm painfully. "Listen, you better forget about this; I'm no Peeping Tom."

They lit cigarets while Joe checked

his memory and said, "I heard you were working down in Washington." He blinked as it came back. "Senator Pearmain's committee—right?"

"You got it, Joe," said Paddy. "What about you?"

"I work for the firm that owns the building," said Joe, with a nod toward 500. "What's wrong with them anyway?"

"I dunno," Paddy told him. "At first I thought we were on the trail of a Commie janitor—but now I don't know what to think. If I told you some of the things... I don't even dare put them in my report."

"I met Matchek this afternoon when the beef on your activity came in," Joe said. "Don't tell me *he's* subversive. He's the dumbest, thickest so-and-so I ever met in my life."

"So he's dumb," said Paddy; "so he's fronting for something not so dumb. We got a lead that this place is a drop for a lot of things that need investigating. But why should I tell you? You're on *their* side. Me, I'm just doing a job."

"And not well," said Joe. "You got spotted."

"Yeah," said Paddy unhappily. "I can't figure *that* out."

Joe knew better than to press further his erstwhile comrade. After another cigaret, he left, with a whole new set of implications to wrestle.

Senator Pearmain was investigating the apartment for traces of subversive activity—and, at the same time, making a play for Nesi. Coincidence? Unlikely; Joe decided further action was in order.

The *Tangier* offered its patrons a gleaming cream-and-cobalt Moorish decor that might have been lifted in toto from the lot of a Hollywood technicolor musical. It also offered good food, good drink, good service, good Latin music—along with table-to-table glimpses of virtually every celebrity worth publicizing this side of the Iron Curtain. It was costly but worth every

double-sawbuck of it—if you had the double-sawbucks and cared for that sort of thing.

Joe bought a scotch at the bar and scanned table-sitters and dancers until he spotted Nesi and Senator Pearlman doing a discreet rhumba on the boxing ring-sized floor. Nesi, in a pistachio-tinted near-topless something; was quite breathtaking. The Senator, in conventional male dinner dress, was quite bad-breath-taking, in Joe's solemn estimation.

Joe downed his drink like a major, squared his shoulders, smoothed his hair with both hands—then wormed his way between tables to the edge of the floor, waited until Nesi and the Senator came floating by, and cut in.

THE SENATOR looked as if he were going to protest but Nesi said quickly, "It's all right, Dion," and came into his arms. She did not look pleased at his appearance, muttered fiercely, "What do you think *you're* doing, Joe?"

"Sorry," he told her, giving his hips an expert flick in time to the beat. "I'll take off in a moment. But I think you ought to know—I cracked that stakeout across from the 500 place. I know the character doing the watching; he's one of Dear Dion's investigators."

Nesi danced a couple more steps, then halted abruptly, causing something of a traffic jam in front of the bandstand. She looked up at Joe, her smooth brow wrinkled, said, "You're not drunk, Joe?"

"It's the truth," he told her. "His name's Locke—Paddy Locke. I was on a couple of missions with him back in the bad old days." He exerted gentle pressure that caused her to resume dancing.

"But why, Joe?" she asked him. "Why?"

"Paddy claims your brilliant super, Bill Matchek, has been spouting leftist

views in his cups. And now he's beginning to get odd ideas about the tenants. And something about the place being a drop. Not that I blame him."

"Then Dion..." Her voice faded and her light eyes began to blaze. Her voice was unnaturally thin as she said, "Then Dion has been playing me for a sucker. Come on." She took his hand, tried to pull him toward the table where the Senator was sitting in solitary state, wiping his lips with a napkin.

"Where to?" Joe asked, holding her back.

"To give that double crossing rodent a piece of my mind," she said. "When I think of how he..." Again words failed her.

"Hold on," said Joe. "Wouldn't it be a lot smarter to go back and stick it out with him as if nothing were wrong?"

"I can't, Joe," she all but wailed. "I'm not enough actress for that. Joe—what am I going to *do*?"

He said, "I'll take you back to your table and duck. You tell your white-haired pal you've got a date with a powder puff; get your wrap and meet me outside. I still think you'd be smarter to stick it out. But anyway, don't blow your stack in public, honey."

Nesi merely nodded. She looked, during their progress back to the table, as if she were carved out of soap. Joe turned her over to the Senator, who was curt to put it mildly, then made his way outside to wait. He was halfway through a cigaret when Nesi slipped out and looked anxiously around for him, hugging a brief red-gold lame stole about her. He put her into a cab, gave the driver her address.

She said, "Joe, this is horrible. What if his—" she evidently could no longer trust herself to call the Senator by name—"spies find out anything? What are we going to do?"

"I thought you were in charge of

this pitch," he told her. "Remember, I'm new here." He looked down in surprise to find her huddling close to him.

She said in a very small voice, "Joe, I'm just realizing it's too much for me—if I'm responsible for betraying my trust to these people, I'll never get over it. I was just about to ask him to do something about that Peeping Tom when you cut in. Why, I'd have blown the whole business sky-high if you hadn't. Thanks, Joe."

Her eyes were shining up at him and he curled to kiss her. He felt all at once like a father to her—rather than like the wayward child she had made of him recently. But, mercifully, there was more to the kiss than that.

He said, when he could, "How long have you known Pearmain?"

She looked thoughtful, replied, "Oh, less than a month. Somebody introduced him to me at a party in Washington. And he was so darned charming and sweet!"

He would be! Joe thought but didn't say it. Nesi, unless her wits had entirely deserted her, had already figured that out. She said, "What do you think I should do about him? After all, I can't just leave him stranded at the table."

"Call him up there when you get to your house," Joe suggested. "Tell him you were suddenly taken ill; let him call you back if he doesn't believe you are home."

"Of course," she said. Then, abruptly, irrelevantly, "Joe, I haven't been very nice to you, have I?"

"You gave me a job," he replied.

She didn't say anything and, after a moment, he discovered that she was silently crying. He said, "Here—none of that," and held his handkerchief to her nose. "Now—*blow!*"

THE CAB pulled up in front of the white marble palace, on a corner of Fifth Avenue and the upper Seventies, which Nesi called home. Joe paid

the driver off, helped her to the sidewalk. She clung to his arm and there was no need to ask if she wanted him to come in. She opened her red-gold lame evening bag, fumbled for her keys...

Another cab door slammed, making Joe jump. He looked around to see Marta Crane moving toward them, unevenly but with determination implicit in every drunken step. He said, "Omi-god!"—it was all he had time to say before the whirlwind was upon them.

"Trying to tell me it was strictly business!" said Marta loudly. "You motheaten weasel!" Then, to Nesi, "I ought to snatch you baldheaded, you rotten spoiled little mansnatcher!"

She made a grab at the smaller girl, which Joe was barely able to fend off. He said to Nesi, "Sorry, honey—get inside and do what I told you; I'll see you tomorrow."

"You'll see nobody tomorrow!" shouted Marta furiously. "Standing me up for Miss Gotrocks, here! I'm going to..." She made another pass at Nesi, who slipped through the heavy iron-and-glass door of the mansion. Joe suppressed an impulse to place a fist hard on the point of Marta's decorative chin; instead, he half-wrestled, half-led her back to her cab.

There, Marta burst into tears. "Leaving me with that All-American wolf!" she sobbed. "Lying to me all this while! Treating me like some cheap shooting-gallery prize!"

He said, icily, "I've never exerted any claim over you, Marta. What gives you the right to exert any over me?"

She said, "Oooooo. Only a *man* could talk like *that!*"—and burst into renewed sobs. By the time they reached her apartment, Marta was maudlin. Joe got her inside and put her to bed. Then he left her and went back to his own apartment—alone.

He rather hoped the phone would ring—but it didn't. And, after a while, he managed to fall asleep.

4



JOE FELT as if he had spent the night in a mixmaster with the current on when he reached the office the next morning. He sent out for coffee, while making a pretense of examining the rental sheets for Wyndham Real-

ty, wondering if he couldn't have dreamed the whole business. More than once, as the hours went by, he reached for the telephone on his desk to call Nesi.

He needed orientation worse than ever before in his thirty-three years—but, after Marta's scene in front of her house, he didn't have the nerve.

At eleven-thirty his secretary informed him that a young lady wished to speak to him over the phone. It was Marta and, for once in her life, she was apologetic. "I don't know what got into me," she told him. "Thanks for bringing me home. I hope I didn't get you in any trouble—I mean, with your job and everything."

"Forget it," said Joe with something less than his usual chivalry. "I'm sorry I stood you up. But believe me, it was necessary."

"If you hadn't lied about your boss..." she said.

"I wasn't exactly lying," he insisted. "Besides, if I went into a tantrum every time you let an ad man take you out—"

"That's different," she said sharply; "that's business."

"So is Nesi Wyndham," he replied.

"Damned funny kind of business if you ask me," said Marta.

"And who asked you?" he countered.

"All right, I said I was sorry, you zombie. How about having dinner with

me tonight? You owe me something for last night."

"Sure—if I don't get tied up," he told her. There was no need to mention time or place. They invariably met at *The Bar Sinister* after work. Marta hung up on him in a huff.

Joe slammed his phone back hard on the cradle. *Undisciplined little so-and-so!* he thought angrily. *Lives on her looks and what she has that passes for brains. Pity the sucker who marries her.* Then, looking up as his secretary entered, "Yes, Miss Peebles?"

Miss Peebles laid a card on the blotter in front of him. "A gentleman to see you, Mr. Maturelli," she said in a voice that matched her ramrod face and figure.

"Show him in," said Joe, suppressing a gulp. For the card read, *Anatol Drayne, Imports and Exports, Manhattan*. Anatol Drayne, the red devil of 500 East 62nd Street, the man from Venus!

At first glance Joe failed to recognize him. His second impression was that Hollywood could take lessons in makeup from this being of another world. He looked like a perfectly normal man of Earth, if one accepted a slight disproportionate thickening about the midsection which, Joe decided, was caused by his furled tail. His eyes were brown with white pupils, his hair dark and well-groomed, his clothing immaculate, even a trifle dandified.

He smiled and said, "I see you're surprised. You shouldn't be; my normal appearance is rather too conspicuous here."

"I can see why it must be," said Joe. Then, "What can I do for you, Mr. Drayne?" He was fascinated by the man's accent.

"We received a call from Miss Wyndham last night," the Venerian said quietly. "Apparently she is turning over much of her share of our business affairs to you."

She might have told me, he thought.

He said, "I hope I don't bungle the job, Mr. Drayne."

"I'm sure you won't," was the reply. "But before we settle down to cases, there is one small matter that is causing us some concern. It has to do with our Martian colleague, Miss Canada Potts."

"Yes?" said Joe with the wary lift of an eyebrow.

"A short while ago," he said, "a young man called on Miss Potts and said you had sent him. She left with him before we could make sure he was what he represented himself to be. I had intended calling upon you this afternoon in any case, but in view of our uncertainty as to this young man's—reliability, I took the liberty of coming here this morning."

"I didn't send anyone," said Joe. He wished Nesi were here—oh, how he wished she were here. Thoughts of Senator Pearmain and Paddy Locke danced through his head, unlike the sugar plums of the Christmas poem. He added, "Did you see him?"

"I caught a glimpse of him," said Anatol Drayne. "He was a very large young man with very light hair."

"Omygod—Stan Wilder!" said Joe, who had forgotten all about his wolfish drinking crony. Apparently the erstwhile reluctant football player had picked up the ball and run with it.

"Should we be worried about him?" the Venerian inquired.

Joe shook his head. "Hardly," he said. "Stan's all right; he happens to have been drooling over Miss Potts for weeks. Like an idiot I told him where she lived—before I knew what the score was."

"I trust his health is good," said Anatol Drayne.

"Huh?" said Joe. Then, "Don't worry—Stan's rugged but he isn't dangerous. Actually he's about as deadly as a panda."

"I'm afraid you don't understand," the Venerian said delicately. "You see, Miss Potts is in season. I'm more con-

cerned as to what she may do to him, than for her welfare. A Martian female in season is—well, she is inclined to be insatiably passionate."

Joe recalled the devouring yet cold-blooded kiss he had received while in her apartment the previous afternoon. He said, "Sort of a one-woman Kinsey Report run amok?"

"You might call it that," said the Venerian with a half-smile; "I think we had better try to find her before evening."

"We ought to be able to find her," said Joe. Then, rising, "And, incidentally, I'd like to take you out for lunch, Mr. Drayne. We can discuss business over a meal."

OUTSIDE and headed for *The Bar Sinister*, he said, "I'm sorry to rush you like this, Drayne, but it just occurred to me that with a Senatorial investigation going on, my office might be tapped."

Drayne shook his head in puzzlement and said, "Sometimes I don't think this planet will ever recover from the cultural setback it received in the last Ice Age. But I suppose you're right."

Joe had half-hoped to find Stan and Miss Potts at *The Bar Sinister* but the missing couple was nowhere in evidence. *Sooner or later*, he thought, *they're bound to show up*. He told Drayne as much. The Venerian thanked him and studied the menu.

The meal Drayne ordered was indicative of his alien origin. It consisted of consomme, into which he poured a small pitcher of sour cream—a small steak over which he poured maple syrup—and, by way of dessert, vanilla ice cream with Russian dressing.

Patiently, he explained the reason for each eerie combination. The sour-cream soup, he explained, was a metabolism requirement to counteract the effect of Earth's debilitating coldness. The same reason applied in part to the steak and maple syrup, augmented by

what were to a Venerian deficiencies in the Earth diet. As for the ice cream with Russian dressing, he said with a twinkle of amused defiance, "I eat it because I like it; I am supposed to like dessert, am I not?"

"To each his own," muttered Joe, who was beginning to enjoy the alien despite his formal ways. He turned the conversation to the business his guest wished to discuss.

"Venus is basically a silicon planet," Anatol informed him. "While we can manufacture or synthesize most of the products we need, there is a great demand for hard wood—ironwood, teak, cypress, mahogany, redwood. Most of our metals are mined on the twilight zone of Mercury, and we have sufficient hard minerals to export. But there is simply no substitute in the entire Solar System for the hard woods of Earth; they are, literally, more valuable than diamonds on Venus."

"I don't want to appear dumb," said Joe, "but I'm absolutely in the dark about this whole operation; how do you get your wood from Earth to Venus?"

"By ship, of course," said the Venerian. "There is a landing due on Miss Wyndham's Pocono estate tomorrow night. We have purchased a shipment of high-grade redwood and mahogany for transport. I merely wish to make certain that it will be there; also, that payment has been made from Miss Wyndham's special account. We have already turned over to her the jewels required for payment at current rates."

"I'll find out," said Joe with a confidence he was far from feeling. "Anything else?"

The Venerian hesitated, then said, "I'm not sure you're sufficiently well acquainted with what we're doing to be of help."

"Try me," said Joe promptly. "After all, if I don't know I can't possibly help you."

"It's rather a delicate matter," said Drayne. "If it were still possible to trade directly behind the Iron Curtain, the problem would be easily solved. But, in recent years, the universal atmosphere of suspicion there has made our little trading projects next to impossible." He paused.

"As a result," he continued, "we have to move just about all of our export materials to our North American drop. Here, thanks to Miss Wyndham and a few others, our trade is still protected. But the rise of general suspicion in the United States is adding to our current difficulties."

"Then you're bringing in something from Russia for pickup tomorrow night?" Joe asked curiously.

Drayne shook his head, replied, "It's not quite that bad. We already have the shipment—it's a Martian perfume base, by the way, and Matchek has it stored in the furnace room of our building. But, with this Peeping Tom activity..." He shrugged.

"I see," said Joe, feeling unhappy about it. If these people—if they were people—were trading with the Soviets, Senator Pearmain might have something. He added, "I'll try to think of something. Why not let it wait till the next interplanetary pickup?"

THE VENERIAN sighed. "I fear you have no understanding of the complexity of such shipping," he said. "Every cubic millimeter of space, every milligram of weight, must be plotted Earth-years in advance. The postponement of even a portion of a cargo could be—well, perhaps not disastrous, but disastrously expensive."

"There's not much time then," said Joe uneasily.

"Virtually none at all," Drayne told him. "Frankly, my associates and I are most unhappy at recent turns of events."

"I can see how you might be," said Joe. Then, because he had nothing further constructive to offer, "Lórd!

What I'd give for a look at your ship tomorrow night!"

The Venerian made a deprecating gesture, said, "It's merely a freighter—not one of the most modern, either. But why not come out with me for a look? I have to be on hand."

"You've got you a man," Joe told him. Then, "One thing that fascinates me is your interplanetary pidgin. How does it work?"

JOE LOST the next two hours. At the end of that time, thanks to his talent and training for linguistics, he had at least a rough idea of how the lingua franca worked. Actually, due to the fact that it operated on three tone-levels, it was an extremely comprehensive system of vocal exchange for all of its basic simplicity.

It even contained, somewhat to his amusement, a number of Earth-terms—notably the Italian *kepishe*, the Spanish *sabe*, the French *comment* and the ubiquitous Anglo-American *okay*. Each word had but a single form—its use as noun, verb, adjective or adverb depending upon the pitch of the user. While the parts of speech were not exactly equivalent, Anatol assured him that their approximation was usable.

Now that he understood it, Joe found that it no longer sounded like duck-talk. He said, frowning as he concentrated on words and proper pitch, "What is the chief staple of Mars-Earth trade?"

"For Mars—vegetable products of Earth—plus some luxury items, like perfume bases," said the Venerian. "For Earth—certain rare Martian lichens used in chemical and other scientific experiments. By the way, you seem to have an amazing knack for languages. I compliment you."

Joe grinned fatuously, then noted the curious regard he and his odd companion were getting from the surrounding tables. He said, "Oh-oh! Better cut it out for now; we're drawing attention."

He longed to ask further questions about interplanetary trade, about life and living on Venus, Mars and the Moons of Jupiter and Saturn; but a glance at his wristwatch informed him that it was already mid-afternoon and he had still to get in touch with Nesi. He said, speaking English this time, "Dammit, I've got to run, Anatol. There must be a couple of million things for me to learn before I have this business in hand. Thanks for the help."

"Thank you for lunch and for one of my most enjoyable afternoons on Earth," said the Venerian. "I, too, must be getting back; my eyes grow sensitive after a few hours in disguise." He paused while Joe paid the check, then added, "You think your friend might bring Miss Potts here? I'm a trifle worried."

"Sooner or later he's bound to," Joe assured him. "I'll cruise back here later and send her packing home."

"Again I am grateful." Anatol hesitated, said, "I begin to think it fortunate that Miss Wyndham has chosen you to help herself and us. Our expanded channels on this continent are still new. Of course, we are perfectly safe; we have certain resources, time-tested ways of taking care of ourselves and our secret. But the risk of discovery remains our greatest concern."

"I'll bet it does," said Joe, leading the way out of the restaurant. "We've got to put a crimp in Senator Pearlmain. He doesn't know what he's meddling with. Well, so long, Anatol. Seeing you."

For the first time, Joe found himself accepting the fact of the aliens' existence, of their presence on Earth. What a tremendous operation it was, he thought. And the beauty of it, their most potent protection, lay in the fact that anyone who tried to expose them would almost certainly be considered a lunatic. He whistled a happy tune.

Since he was so thoroughly late, he used the back way, not wishing to face

any outraged would-be lessees who might be awaiting him in the outer office. He was going to *have* to get hold of Nesi. Despite what he had learned from the Venerian at lunch, he felt like a hinterlander at the helm of a huge ocean liner.

Using the back way proved to be a mistake. Had he come in as usual, Miss Pebbles might have been able to warn him. As it was he walked right into the arms of Paddy Locke, figuratively at any rate. Paddy was sitting in Joe's chair, with his feet on Joe's desk, wreathed in smoke from a large and odorous dark-brown cigar.

When Joe came in he turned his head lazily, said, "About time! What a racket—three hours for lunch!" He got to his feet, added, "Well, let's go—the Senator don't like to be kept waiting."

SENATOR PEARMAIN was ensconced in a luxurious two room suite atop a semi-residential hotel between Park and Lexington. Although his face was drawn with lines of strain and fatigue, he still presented a vital and handsome figure of a politician. He ordered Paddy Locke outside with a slight nod of his silver-thatched head, then told Joe to sit down.

"Maturelli," he said after giving Joe the benefit of a thorough going over with his eyes, "you seem to have the unenviable faculty of being very much in my hair."

"My only regret," said Joe, "is that it is wholly accidental."

The Senator permitted himself a smile. His voice, when he spoke, had the weary half-huskininess of too many speeches, too many highballs, too many conferences in the proverbial smoke-filled rooms. He said, "I think I was justified in being annoyed with you last night; you see, I had planned to propose to Miss Wyndham."

"You show excellent taste," said Joe, wondering what the Senator had in store for him.

"Thank you." The words were accompanied by a courtly nod. "My annoyance faded, however, less than an hour ago, when Miss Wyndham consented to be my wife."

"You're joking!" Joe simply couldn't believe it.

Pearmain's blue ice turned to ice-chips. He said, "I have been accused of many things in my time, young man, but never of having a sense of humor. I am not a light man by nature." He paused, then resumed his oration with, "My annoyance with you returned manyfold in short order. First, my bride-to-be, with commendable if scarcely diplomatic candor, confessed to an episode at Southampton, some ten or twelve years ago, in which you were involved."

There was another pause and Joe said nothing. The Senator cleared his throat and went on with, "Naturally, I shall hate your intestines as long as I live. But I trust that the many things my fiancée and I have in common will, in time, cause this bitter memory to fade."

Joe was stunned. He wondered if Nesi had gone out of her mind; he could think of nothing to say.

"Then my trusted investigator, Mr. Locke, came to me with a report of your activities last night," the Senator said. "I have reason to believe, as a result of his investigation, that my bride-to-be has been victimized by some highly unwholesome aliens, who have been utilizing one of her properties as a headquarters for their subversive intrigue. Naturally, I cannot permit this to endure."

"Why come to me?" Joe was on the alert now.

"Because, apparently for sentimental reasons, Agnes—Miss Wyndham has asked me to protect you against any involvement in the action I plan against these undesirables—though frankly, I have good reason to suspect you of *being* involved. Therefore, I am forced to put you in confinement of a

sort until my plans are completed and my fiancée and I are safely on our honeymoon tomorrow."

"You're going to have a busy day, Senator," said Joe. Then, "Why not relax this—investigation of yours. It seems highly unlikely to me that Nesi—Miss Wyndham—would allow herself to become caught in anything really dangerous to her country."

Pearmain's eyebrows, black as ink, drew together in a terrifying frown. "Young man," he said, "you may consider yourself fortunate that I do not plan to take Congressional action against you. I am choosing, perhaps unwisely, to consider you a mere nuisance—rather than a threat—until my plans are complete."

"As to the danger represented by this group of aliens battenng so viciously upon Miss Wyndham," he went on, "you are either grossly ignorant or a traitorous liar, young man. What if I were to tell you that I have proof—not jury proof, perhaps, but sufficient to be convincing to myself—that these aliens had actually brought in, under cover, sufficient supplies of a singularly deadly new poison gas to reduce all of New York to a dead city in a mere matter of hours?"

"I wouldn't believe you," Joe said promptly. And as promptly recalled what Anatol Drayne had admitted over a lunch-cloth about smuggling from behind the Iron Curtain.

"Then you're an idiot," said the Senator.

The interview was over, and Joe didn't know why it had taken place. He decided the Senator must have wished a second look at the opposition that had come so close, in his soloncal estimation, to upsetting his apple wagon. Come to consider it, Joe thought, the so-and-so was playing a pretty good hand. But why Nesi had ever consented to become his wife...

Joe shrugged, went on out, utterly baffled.

Paddy picked him up in the corri-

dor, walked with him to the elevator, pressed the *down* button. Joe said, "Thanks, Paddy—be seeing you around."

"You're so right, Joe," said Paddy; "you're on ice, boy."

5



JOE THOUGHT it over while he and Paddy Locke rode down in the hotel elevator. Outside, he said, "Suppose I start yelling violation of my civil rights? I haven't done anything you can charge me with."

Paddy gave him a quizzical look. Then he said, "You think not? You underestimate me, Joe. I could run up a very interesting list—and you could never clear yourself by eight a.m."

Joe thought it over, then said, "What time's the wedding?"

"Ten o'clock," said Paddy; "but you won't be there."

"I think the whole idea is crazy," said Joe. "Where the hell are you holding me?"

Paddy looked hurt. "We ain't holdin' you, Joe," he replied. "Whatever gave you that idea? You're just gonna spend a few hours in the privacy of your own apartment. And I do mean *privacy*."

Joe said, "For Lord's sake, let's have a drink somewhere before the death watch starts. I know a place close to my joint; I'll buy."

"You can say that again," said Paddy. "Which way?"

"Come on," said Joe, feeling suddenly weak in the knees. He had been desperately afraid his former colleague would turn down his suggestion. Because, between what the Senator and Paddy had told him, he was beginning

to get a most unhappy preview of events to come.

Pearmain had talked about "planned action against these undesirable" and "confinement until my plans are completed and my fiancée and I are safely on our honeymoon tomorrow." Paddy had given the hour of eight a.m. as a deadline, although the wedding was not scheduled for a couple of hours later. It looked to Joe very much as if the Senator was planning an eight-o'clock raid on the 500 East 62nd Street premises, to gain the whiphand over Nesi before he married her. The more he considered it, the surer he became.

The problem was to warn the inmates of the apartment house. Joe did not for a moment doubt their ability to take care of themselves if they were prepared. He felt certain that the telephone in his own apartment would be disconnected—else he would scarcely be confined there. His one chance, he knew, was *The Bar Sinister*. At this time of day Stan Wilder was almost certain to be there—which meant that Canada Potts might also be on hand. And Anatol Drayne might have returned there in an effort to locate the errant Martian girl.

Just what he could do, or how, Joe didn't know. He was going to have to play them as they came. But *The Bar Sinister* was his only chance. He felt certain the Senator had not been naive enough to give Nesi an inkling of his real plans. And if he could couple her to anything that looked like subversive activity, he would enjoy a powerful whip over her once they were married—over her and her fortune.

Stan Wilder was alone at the bar when Joe and Paddy entered. He looked flushed, a little punchdrunk and greeted Joe enthusiastically. "Lordy!" he exclaimed. "You sure set me up, baby—never met anything like her."

"Watch yourself, bub," warned Paddy out of the side of his mouth as Joe introduced him to the tall Californian.

"If you try anything, it'll cost you."

Joe figured it probably would, knowing Paddy of yore. He murmured, "Don't worry—I'm no idiot." Inwardly he was trying desperately to work out some way of conveying to Stan a message for his new girl friend—if "girl" was precisely the word for Canada Potts.

He said, "Have a big time with the little lady?"

"Brother!" said Stan, his somewhat glazed eyes taking on a sheen of sheer satisfaction. "She's out of this world!"

"I'm glad you're glad," said Joe, stifling the obvious retort—that Canada Potts actually *was* from out of this world. He said, "Where did you leave her?"

"Oh, she's here," said Stan. "She went back to powder her beautiful snoot."

Paddy, with his rye boilermaker in front of him said, "What *is* this, Joe?"

"You'll see any minute," Stan Wilder replied. He made the immemorial hour-glass gesture, kissed his fingertips. "If Joe hadn't located her for me, I'd never have known where to find her."

"She walked into my office yesterday," said Joe modestly; "it seems Stan has been ogling her for months."

A DOOR SLAMMED in the rear of the restaurant and Joe became tinglingly alert, while he tightened his grip on his as yet untouched scotch mist. This, he knew, was going to be it. Either he was going to get his message through to the Martian or there was going to be no warning. He had a plan of sorts—clumsy, but it would have to do.

Stan and Paddy were facing the bar and Joe was nearest the rear, which was all to the good. He watched Canada Potts approach out of the corner of his eye, noting irrelevantly that she looked as perfectly groomed as ever. When she came abreast of him, he swung about, as if accidentally, and

spilled his drink all over her dress in the collision that resulted.

Canada gave vent to an odd combination of sounds that could only have been a Martian curse. Stan cried out and Joe professed apologies for his clumsiness, grabbing a bar napkin and making a move to dry the wet spots on Canada's dress. She tried to pull away from him but he held her and whispered, in interplanetary lingua franca, "Raid tomorrow morning—eight." Then, in English, "Lord! I'm sorry, Miss Potts; I didn't see you coming at all."

"There's nothing to be done about it—*kapishe*," she replied and he noted she was still sweating lightly. Then, to Wilder, "Stan, I'm afraid I'd better go home; I seem to be soaked through."

Joe professed further apologies as relief coursed through him. In "season" or not, the Martian had her wits about her; his message was through. He and Paddy had another drink together, then walked the brief distance to his apartment. Joe decided to take a stand when they reached it. He had had quite enough of Paddy Locke for the present, had no idea of letting him inside for the night, said so. "You didn't used to be this way," said the investigator.

"And you didn't used to frame evidence on your friends," said Joe.

"I gotta eat," Paddy told him.

"Perhaps," said Joe. "But if you've got to play watchdog for me, do it outside. I don't doubt you or your pals have already been through this place. If you must be a *Fides Achates*, do it in style on the doorstep. Good bye now."

"What's a feedase akateys?" Paddy asked. He added, "Don't bother tryin' to use your phone, chum. It's out of order."

"Thanks," said Joe. "Thanks a lot, Paddy; happy doorstep."

He went on in, shut and bolted the door behind him, leaned against it in sheer relief. He went on into the living room, noted that a lamp was turned

on. Paddy and his boys were getting sloppy, he decided. He didn't see Nesi until she rose from the sofa and came toward him, saying, "Darling, I thought you were *never* coming!"

FOR ONCE in his life, Joe was stunned. He stood there stupidly, while Nesi wrapped her arms around him, saying, "I've done the most terrible thing, darling—the most awful thing. But I had to do it and I want you to understand."

"If you're talking about your impending marriage to Senator Pearhead Pearmain, that alleged gentleman just finished informing me about it himself," he told her. He looked down at her, saw her lips upraised to his, was unable to resist them. All at once it was like a retake of that now notorious weekend he had spent with Nesi a dozen years ago at Southampton. He wondered if any Martian, in or out of "season", could be better than this.

There was another fugitive thought of chivalry—of his letting this girl have her way with him on the eve of her marriage to another man. Then he thought of the other man in the case, of Paddy Locke doing guard duty outside the door—and gladly kissed chivalry farewell for the nonce. It was simply too good to resist—instead of keeping Nesi and himself apart, all they had succeeded in doing was locking them up together.

When some measure of sanity returned to both of them he looked at her and said, "What got into you anyway, honey—you're not going to marry that big phoney now, are you?"

"I must," she said simply. "You see, he—his investigators, rather—have found out too much about my—my real job. There's only one way to protect my people. I've got to do it, darling." In the dim light of the bedroom, tears were running down her face.

"Then what the hell is *this* all about?" he asked her.

"I don't blame you for talking like that," she said tragically. "Probably

I seem cheap—probably I always have. I gave myself to you once before, remember—when I thought I was going to lose you."

So *that* was it, Joe thought. Nesi was one of those women who could not be stirred except by the thought of sacrifice. For the first time in his life he understood her—and, understanding her, fell out of love with her. Nesi was not the chilled steel character he had always supposed her to be—she was rather a prime neurotic perfectly calculated to make some poor husband miserable.

The protest against her marriage to Senator Pearmain, that had been on his lips, remained unuttered. Instead, he said, "When did you decide you were in love with me? You've given me a hard time—you're *still* giving me one." He added the last out of politeness.

"I think I've always loved you, darling," she informed him, nestling against him, her lips lying close to his. "But last night..."

"You mean when I cut you out with the Senator?" he asked.

She shook her head. "No, darling—not that I wasn't grateful. I didn't realise how I felt until that dreadful girl made that ghastly scene in front of my house. Then I *knew* how I felt. Oh, Joe—when I think of all the time we've wasted!"

"Not me—you," he told her. So Nesi was going to marry the Senator. Somehow it fitted. But in his mind's eye he was thinking of Marta. Marta might not be rich, Marta might not be a lady, but Marta didn't have to offer herself only as a sacrifice. All at once, Joe felt grateful to the Senator.

LATER THEY had something to eat and drink and, across the kitchen table, Joe said, "Nesi, we've got work to do. If you're going to cut me in on this interplanetary business, there are a couple of things I've got to know."

"That's the reason I came up here—part of it, anyway," she told him.

"If I take Dion out of the play, you've got to fill in for me. You see, his Peeping Tom has thrown a monkey wrench into a planned deal that must be completed tomorrow—no, tonight."

"I know something about that little deal," he told her. "So what's the idea of bringing in Soviet poison gas as a Martian perfume base? Or didn't you know about it?"

"Of course I did!" she exclaimed. "Oh dear, I know it sounds awful, but it isn't, really. You must have noticed Miss Potts' perfume when you were with her."

"I did," said Joe.

"Sniffing it didn't hurt you, did it?" she asked. And, when he shook his head, "You know, all sorts of things make perfume bases. Well, there's something about a fusion of this nerve-gas with a native blend of Martian chemicals that produces a harmless scent their women are crazy for. And you know the power of a woman..."

"I'm learning," said Joe a trifle grimly. "But why go to Russia to get it? Why not buy it right here?"

"Because we couldn't," Nesi almost wailed. "Dion's investigators had the American supplies sewed up too tightly. We *had* to make the purchase from Russia—unofficially, of course."

"Of course," said Joe. "And just how am I supposed to help out? If I get caught transporting the stuff out of 500, to this spaceport of yours in the Poconos, I'm a dead drake. And so, probably, is the whole interplanetary trading racket."

"Don't call it a racket," she told him primly. And, with a sigh, "Now, perhaps, you understand why I'm so anxious to get out from under?"

"I wouldn't call marrying Dion Pearmain exactly getting out from under," he suggested.

She made a gesture of distaste. "Let's not talk about it now, darling." She looked around, saw it was growing light outside. "Why, we've wasted the whole night!" she exclaimed.

"I wouldn't say that," he replied.

All at once he remembered what he had learned and deduced about the Senator's plans the afternoon before. In the excitement of finding Nesi in his apartment, the intensity of their relationship, their discussion of the poison gas-perfume for Mars deal, Joe had forgotten about the raid. He said, "Just what is the good Senator offering you, honey, in return for you and your fortune?"

"He's not going to get my fortune," she replied with a determined thrust of her chin. "But for the rest, Dion has agreed not to make any move against my people until after our honeymoon. By that time I'm counting on having made different and safer arrangements for them—with your help, darling, of course."

"Of course, sweet," Joe mocked. Then, seriously, "I hate to tell you this, Nesi, but you're getting rooked."

"What do you mean?" she asked him.

He told her about the raid—which was scheduled, to his best belief, to take place within 40 minutes. He told her how he had figured it out. Finally, he told her about his visit to *The Bar Sinister* and the clumsy but effective way in which he had got a warning to Canada Potts. "So I guess it's okay," he concluded, "Anatol told me they could take care of themselves."

But Nesi had turned pale. She said, "You should have let me know sooner, Joe. This is awful!"

"Why?" he wanted to know.

"It's Titan—the invisible one—they don't have names on Titan," she said. "It's—the trouble is, he can't be moved this rapidly in Earth's gravity and atmosphere."

"He got around the apartment house okay," said Joe, puzzled.

"That's because he was close to his tank," said Nesi. "If he gets more than fifty yards away for more than an hour, he gets ill. And moving his tank is like moving two concert grands at once."

"Still going to marry the Senator?"

Joe asked her.

"More than ever." Nesi's lips tightened. "If he's *that* dangerous, I'll have to keep an eye on him day and night." Then, reading Joe's expression correctly, "Darling, surely you understand; you and I simply weren't fated to live our lives together."

"We might have made it though," he replied, "if you hadn't made it so tough for both of us."

She was in his arms, her eyes filled with tears. "Please don't, darling!" she pleaded. "I know I deserve it—I don't know, sometimes I think I must be crazy. But at least we've got memories to go on."

"That we do," said Joe, thinking of the last time Marta had spent the night with him. He decided that he had been making life at least as difficult for Marta as Nesi had made it for him. If he ever got out of this interplanetary mess...

Nesi was shaking him, crying, "Joe! Snap out of it! We've got to get up to 62nd Street and stop that raid."

He was just struggling into his jacket when what sounded like a junior riot broke out in the hallway beyond the apartment front door. Nesi, struggling to get her silver-red hair in some sort of order, looked at Joe in alarm, said, "What's that?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," he replied blandly, though he had already recognized the voices of an outraged Paddy Locke and an even more outraged Marta Crane. Then, "Come on. Out the window. I'll go first—I can make the terrace next door easily. Then I'll pull you across. There's a fire-escape there."

"Why not use the door?" asked Nesi, perplexed.

"Because," said Joe, "there's a rat in the hall. And he works for the rat you intend to marry today. If Pearmain finds out about you and me last night, he'll not only not marry you—

that might be fine—but he'll have me killed—which might not be so good. Remember that, will you, honey?"

"I'll remember, darling," she said. He gave her a quick buss, then scrambled out the window and extended a hand for her. Minutes later they were in a cab, speeding uptown toward 500 East 62nd Street.

6



HEY RAN a dead heat with the Senator's raid. He emerged from a black sedan, accompanied by a couple of tough-looking plainclothes operatives, just as Joe and Nesi stepped onto the sidewalk.

There was a brief tableau of silent, startled recognition in front of the entrance to 500 East 62nd Street.

Then Nesi said coldly, "So this is the way you keep your word."

The Senator shot his cuffs. In soothing-syrup tones, he said, "My dear, I can imagine your feelings. But consider mine; my first duty is, as it has always been, toward the welfare of my country. And surely this is bigger than our personal feelings."

"How corny can you get?" Joe put in.

Dion Pearmain's black brows beetled ferociously as he noted Joe's presence for the first time. "Young man," he said, "this time you have gone too far. I warned you..." He motioned one of his hard-faced aides, who stepped toward Joe.

But Nesi said, "If you lay a hand on Joe, our wedding is off. If there were anything subversive here—which there isn't—Joe is not involved in any way. You leave him alone."

The Senator wrestled silently with himself on the sidewalk; Duty fought

valiantly against the thought of the Wyndham millions, and Duty lost. Pearmain said ominously, "All right, leave him alone—for now." Then, to Joe, "But don't try anything, young man." And, to Nesi, "Very well, my dear, shall we go inside?" He offered her an arm in true courtly fashion.

Nesi balked. She stayed put, said, "No, Dion, if you expect me to keep my pledge to you, you'll have to keep yours to me; if you enter this building, our marriage is off."

Again the Senator went into a one-man wrestling match; and this time Expediency got into the fight to make it a three-way affair. He said, "Very well—but if this young man means so much to you, I feel entirely justified in taking action against him. Unless you release me from that part of the pledge, I shall have to conduct the raid as planned."

It was Nesi's turn to wrestle. The look she turned on Joe was at first piteous, then became dominated by an expression of inimitable compassion. Joe began to wish increasingly for an ability to render himself invisible like the creature from Titan. Nesi was running true to form; she was unable to resist a sacrifice, even if it involved a man she claimed to have loved for more than a decade and with whom she had just spent the night.

Joe decided it was time to speak for himself. He said, "Listen, Senator—why not compromise? You and Nesi—Miss Wyndham take off and get married. Let Paddy Locke take over here; I'll be glad to remain in his custody."

"Oh, Joe—*thank* you!" Nesi exclaimed. "That will make everything perfect, won't it, my dear?"

After a moment the Senator growled, "Yeah—except that Paddy isn't here."

"Reporting for duty, chief," said Paddy, coming to a stop in front of the Senator. He cast a malevolent eye at Joe, an eye that appeared to be, turning rapidly black.

"Very well then," said Pearmain. "It's your pigeon, Locke; and heaven help you if you foul it up."

"I won't, sir," said the agent.

"Better call off the rest of your dogs," said Joe.

It took some doing but, with Nesi's support, Joe found himself, minutes later, standing with Paddy on the pavement. Paddy said, "You wait till I get you in private, you louse; what's the idea of setting that babe on me?"

"*Me?* Setting a babe on *you?*" Joe countered, though he could guess how Paddy had acquired the black eye. Crossing his fingers mentally, he hoped Marta was all right. He added, "It was damned decent of you, Paddy, to stand guard over Miss Wyndham and me last night, while she was indulging in her final pre-marital fling."

"*Huh?*" Paddy's mouth fell open and his one good remaining eye became glazed with horror. "*Joe!*" he whispered hotly. "I didn't—you wouldn't..."

"Not if you behave yourself, sugar," Joe said sweetly.

"But I *gotta* walk through a raid," Paddy pleaded.

Realizing that he held the whip hand over the agent, Joe nodded politely and led the way inside the house. The outer door was unlatched and Joe, after looking around the foyer briefly, rapped on the door of Canada Potts' apartment.

JOE WONDERED what precautions the aliens had taken.

He didn't have long to wait. Paddy Locke rapped again, when his first summons was unanswered, then shouted, "Open up in there."

The door was flung violently open. A large bare fist appeared rapidly, backed by a singularly large hairy muscular arm. The fist made fear-some, scrunching impact with the Locke countenance. The agent gave vent to a single squawk of alarm, then flew

back across the foyer to thump his head hard against the opposite wall and collapse in a heap on the floor.

Stan Wilder, clad in peppermint striped shorts, appeared from behind his fist. He looked at Joe, then at the unconscious Paddy, then back at Joe. He said mildly, "What's the big idea, chum?"

"You just knocked out a Congressional investigator," said Joe. And, as Miss Potts, wearing a coral pink robe, appeared in the doorway, "You could have done without him tonight, honey."

"We thought we might need him," said a new voice. Anatol Drayne, wearing his human disguise under a beautifully tailored Oxford grey lounge suit, stood in the elevator door. "I was listening at my window, Joe; you seem to have handled things well."

"Thanks," said Joe, "but I'll never keep out of jail now. I might as well be hung for a sheep though. What do you want me to do?"

"We need a car," said the Venerian thoughtfully. "Matchek has need of the truck. How about him?" With a nod toward Paddy Locke.

"Better frisk him before he comes to," said Joe.

"Will do," Stan Wilder put in. And, as he padded across the foyer to obey, "Don't worry, chum. They let me in on what this thing is all about last night; I'm for Canada, so I'll play ball."

He crouched, removed a gun, a wallet, a handkerchief and a book of keys from the unconscious man's pocket. Drayne said, "His car's down the block; I saw him get out of it when he got here. Shall we go?"

Outside they found the ape-like Matchek in the act of closing the car-trunk on Paddy Locke's sedan. Drayne looked at the janitor inquisitively. "All loaded up, Bill?" he asked.

"All load," said the latter. "No key—I bust lock."

Joe got into the front seat as the Venerian took his place behind the wheel. He said, "Anatol, think I can earn a living on Venus or Mars?"

DRAYNE looked at him oddly when they stopped for a red light on their way across town to the Lincoln Tunnel. He said, "Are you joking, Joe? Sometimes it's hard to tell."

"I'm not joking," Joe moaned. "When Paddy Locke comes out of it, back there, he'll keep after me till he has me behind bars. What's more, he'll get the Senator after me. And Nesi will have to keep shut lest she expose the whole shebang—and I'll have to keep shut or be locked up as a lunatic. No, I'm for taking a *long* trip."

Drayne said, "With your gift for languages, you could be very useful on Venus. Mars might prove—uncomfortable for you during parts of the year. But you could adapt to Venus; other Earthfolk have. Of course, you know you can never come back here. That's why we never *ask* anyone from Earth to make the trip."

"Consider me a volunteer," Joe told him. "I don't know what I'm getting into, but it couldn't be worse than what I've got into right here in little old New York."

"You have a point," Drayne told him. "I fear you may be right to consider yourself—expendable. Of course, once we have taken care of moving Titan's tub, we can protect ourselves. Miss Potts has United Nations Diplomatic Immunity, while I have influential connections. And even your impetuous young friend, Wilder, can hardly be blamed for falling for a girl as charming as Miss Potts. But you, I fear, will be a goat if you remain. It might be wise for you to—leave."

"Where are you taking Titan, by the way?" Joe asked, just for something to say while he considered the step he was planning. Oddly enough, he found himself really regretting but

one thing that leaving Marta forever.

"Temporarily, to Miss Wyndham's house," was the reply. "Matchek and your friend Wilder are making the move under Miss Potts' supervision. Miss Wyndham has the only available bathroom large enough to contain both him and his tub."

He paused, added, "You may be lonely at first on Venus. I can speak from experience when I warn you that life on a strange planet is not happy at first. Everything is too alien, too different. But you will adjust—and from what I have seen of your temperament, you're not the type to stay lonely long."

They were somewhere midway in the Jersey Meadows as the Venerian finished his statement. And, from behind them, a voice spoke, a female voice for the moment both cynical and venomous. It belonged to Marta Crane, and she said, "That's just what I'm afraid of. I don't know where



you're going, Joe, but I'm not letting you out of my sight."

Joe and the Venerian exchanged a glance of complete surprise and then Joe said, "Where in hell did you come from, Marta?"

"From right here under the rug, where that goon put me after he dragged me out of your apartment house."

"It's all right," said Joe. "Get up?"

"How can I?" she retorted, "when I'm handcuffed to the heater?"

Joe pulled the keys from the ignition without turning it off. He scrambled over into the back seat and tried one after another, until, at last, he got his girl unlocked. She essayed the impossible task of assuming frozen hauteur while trying to get herself in some sort of order. Finally she said, "Where are we anyway?"

"I don't know about you," Joe told her, "but I'm on my way to Venus by fast freight."

"Now I know you're really crazy," the girl told him. But anger returned and she blazed, "You stood me up two nights running, you rat! So when I decided to crash your place this morning, this goon at the door knocked me cold. Did you hire him to keep me out, or was it an idea of that business-as-usual boss of yours?"

"Hardly—it was the idea of Senator Pearmain—the man she's marrying today," Joe told her.

SHE REFUSED stoutly to believe any part of this statement until, shortly after they reached the Poconos, it came in as a newsflash over the car radio. And then, when she saw some of the alien apparatus on the great field, hidden in a deep bowl-like valley of Nesi's inherited estate, protected from intruders by an electrified wire mesh fence, she looked at Joe in something like panic.

"Joe," she whispered, "are you really going—somewhere?"

He put down carefully the cylinder

of nerve-gas he had just removed from the trunk compartment of the car. "That's right," he said, "I'm going to Venus. Hell, sugar, I've got to; I'm in so much trouble I couldn't hope to stay out of jail on this planet."

"Joe," she said, looking as if she were going to be sick. "Is there anywhere around here I could lie down?"

"Sure," said Joe. "Just hang on a moment." He finished stowing the final cylinder in a pick-up revetment on the edge of the circular field, then escorted the bewildered girl toward the long, low lodge, whose rustic exterior belied the luxury of its internal appointments.

Most of the afternoon he spent with Anatol Drayne, while the Venerian briefed him on the second planet. Once his lungs had been adapted to certain atmosphere differences, he learned, he would be able to live quite comfortably.

"You'll even find a small Earth-colony at Venus City," said Drayne. "And, of course, there are always a number of Martian girls and women in the interplanetary colony. Oddly enough, their males do not transplant as well; the Martian male is brittle, inadaptable."

"Sounds bearable," said Joe. "But what will I do?"

"Probably work with translations," the Venerian told him. "The way your people are producing books, there's an appalling lot of it to be done. The Interplanetary Council has to keep in touch, you know. I repeat, you ought to make a valuable interworld citizen."

There were a thousand details to try to absorb in a very few hours. And then, with Drayne and a shivering Marta, he stood in the post-twilight darkness, watching the vast shape of the space-ship to blot out the stars while it came down slowly for a perfect landing.

He was introduced to the captain, who directed unloading and loading operations largely by means of a flash-

light strapped to the tip of his tail. Matter-of-fact bustle—what might have been the routine activity of an airport, a railroad station or a bus-terminal—went on around them with smooth efficiency. Rare minerals and other import items, were put aground, the hardwood and nerve-gas taken aboard. Then it was time for Joe to say farewell.

"You'll have plenty of room," the captain informed him. "We dropped off a couple of extra passengers in the Asteroid Belt on our way in from Titan. Glad to have you aboard."

"Joe." Marta's voice was no longer quavering, as it had been most of the day. It was decided, even possessive, as she said, "I'm coming with you. Some of these women look much too much like women for me to have a moment's peace if I don't."

Joe looked at Anatole Drayne. The latter smiled in the darkness and said, "I think you'll find they *are* women. And women of Earth are considered

singularly beautiful on my planet. In fact, some schools of thought hold them the most beautiful of the entire Solar System."

"Reverse Venuses," said Joe. "I'll be damned!"

"I'm coming with you," Marta repeated firmly. "So don't try to stop me, if you know what's good for you."

"Who's trying?" Joe countered. "Come on, honey—let's get aboard."

A little later, when they were alone in an alien cabin, he heard her giggle, eyed her suspiciously, asked, "What's so funny?"

She said, looking pleasantly evil, "Oh, I was just thinking of what's going to happen when Senator Pearmain takes his first bath in his bride's house."

And Joe, recalling where Titan's tub had been placed, knew then—if he had ever doubted it—that he wasn't going to be lonely.



He jumped ship, seeking adventure and the glory of being the first human being to land on an unknown planet. Then the glamor wore off, a cocky kid grew up fast, to become a man making his

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SCIENCE FICTION STORIES

The apes were only supposed to operate a pair of typewriters each as a circus stunt. That was until a promoter remembered what a famous scientist has said once...



THE SEDULOUS APES

by Dennis Wiegand

illustrated by Kelly Freas

SO HERE I am almost tearing an arm off at the elbow trying to tie on my surgical mask. The darn thing ties at the back and I'm feeling sort of rocky.

There's a couple of giggles from up on the gallery the third time I drop it on the floor. I throw them a glare that shuts them up in a hurry. Brother, the way my eyes look this morning it must have been as if somebody tosses a whole bucket of blood on those smart-alecky students.

Then Bumpsy comes waggling across the floor and ties the darn mask on me. There's a couple of whistles from the gallery; but nothing a guy could

resent. And anyhow, Bumpsy likes it. I have to admit that she sure looks like what the doctor ordered from Santa Claus in that snakey white Nylon uniform, and with that cocky little white cap stuck up on top of all that blonde hair.

"Say, Doc," she says in that whiny sort of way she talks, "there's sure somethin' wrong with Emile Zola this mornin'. He don't act right; didn't make no passes nor nothin' when I take his tempachoor."

"Ah, so?" I say. "Hummm." And I say it good and loud for the gallery. "Hummm. Well, let's take a squint at the hairy ba...patient."

We make a mighty impressive parade as we march out into the center of the arena, with Bumpsy out in front and wriggling and stepping high like one of those drum majorettes they have here at the college.

Bumpsy pulls up in front of the curtain across Cubicle Number Eleven and pulls it aside for me. She does it with a sort of little flourish and a sweep and tosses a big, wet smile up at the gallery. I reach out and slap her one where the students can't see it when I go on through the curtain, just to sort of remind her that this ain't burleycue.

"Take it easy, Bumpsy," I warns her. "There ain't no paid admissions up there; just a buncha dead-beat students. Act professional."

She's about to give me some lip, but I wave to her to shut up—on account of what I see in the cubicle is pretty amazing. Emile Zola isn't lying on his cot and loafing the way I figured he'd be. Instead he's sitting at his desk and pounding away like mad at both typewriters. But there isn't any paper in the one he's working with his feet. The roll's already run through, and there's a whole ten minutes to go before he's supposed to start work.

"Miss Wells," I tell Bumpsy, sort of stiff, as a Doc should, "kindly fix up another rolla paper for Emile's other typewriter. An gimme that roll he's already finished with."

"Okay, Doc," says Bumpsy. "But you watch he don't pinch me or nothin' when I'm bendin' over."

I slap a palsy-walsy arm across Emile Zola's hairy shoulders and lean over and pretend to be real interested in what he's writing. That's strictly for the gallery. But Emile knows all I have to do if he makes one funny move is to flip my hand over and poke my finger in his ear.

Emile can't stand having a finger poked in his ear. Funny thing. Otherwise you'd figure he was made out of lead—especially when he lets go one of

them haymakers. But there isn't a twitch out of him this morning. He just keeps on banging away at those typewriters, even with Bumpsy bent over right there in easy reach.

"Hummmm. This is serious, Miss Wells. Hummm," I tell Bumpsy when she straightens up and hands me the used roll of paper. "He's actin' peculiar."

"Didn't I tell you?" she says, adjusting her little cap the best she can without a mirror. Doesn't do bad, neither. I get an urge to smooch her a little; but then it comes over me that the students up on the gallery can see us down here.

THE WAY we have it rigged, see, is we have these wires stretched criss-cross from one side of the joint to the other. Then we have canvas curtains hung along these wires to make eighteen cubicles, as Jeep calls them. Each cubicle has an army cot and a desk in it. There's two typewriters in each cubicle—one on the floor under the desk and one on top of the desk. All of those typewriters are rigged up so they feed from rolls of yellow paper like those in a teletype machine.

I guess this joint used to be a gymnasium, and there's a gallery running around all four sides of it. The way I understand it, this gymnasium isn't good for much any more because Twigg College hasn't had any athletic activities worth putting a roof over since the Civil War draft got most of the promising candidates.

So now it's a scientific research center. That's how come me and Bumpsy are making like a doctor and nurse. Naturally, it's a little out of our regular line; but, believe me, it's better than starving. In fact, maybe being a doctor might be a pretty fair racket if you were to specialize in women. They aren't hardly ever really sick anyhow, according to all of those articles in magazines.

But being an ape doctor is no bed of

roses. Apes hardly ever get just frustrated. And even when all they got is the sniffles they're liable to take the thermometer and ram it into your best eye. Apes are hell to doctor, unless they happen to get a tin ear like Emile Zola's. Now, you take one like this Harriet Stowe over there in Cubicle Number Seven; when she's nursing something like a horsefly bite, there's more red hell raised than May Day in Moscow.

"The stinker's tempachoor's okay, though," says Bumpy. "Maybe it's all in his mind... if he's got one."

I resent this crack. "Yeah?" I tell her. "An' since when could you run a typewriter? Even just one typewriter? It's just he's upset about writin' in a new language, probably. Here he's been writin' along in French for a week, typin' up military statistics an' stuff... an' then bang, alluva sudden, English."

"Hey," says Bumpy, tipping her head so she can get a gander at the roll of yellow paper I have under my arm. "Hey, Doc, you're right. It's English, sure enough! Hey, what's this word mean?"

"Heck, I don't know," I pass it off. "Maybe an ape word that got in by mistake." I quick shift the roll to the other arm. "Time to blow the whistle. I'm goin' up on the gallery to check they're all workin', an' then I'm goin' to take a quick duck over to the Hotel Dorm with this roll. Jeep'll probably wanta see it first thing... bein' it's the most English we got so far."

"You go on ahead," she urges. "I'll go up on the gallery an' watch."

"Amongst all them stoo-dents?" I tell her. "Hah! Fat chance! We can't afford no trouble. Don't forget them young bums come from the best homes. Nobody's never slapped 'em silly for doin' somethin' they wanna do that they ain't suposeta. You leave 'em alone."

So I walk through the joint blowing this whistle to get the apes working. I go on out into the hall and up the stairs

to the gallery where I can see down into all the cubicles at once.

I'm tickled to see there's only one gold-brick. "Miss Wells," I yell down to Bumpy in a dignified and professional glare, and stomp on out, brushing a couple of newspaper reporters off my back against the side of the door on the way out.

THIS MONKEY business is sure a success all right. Twigg College is crawling with reporters. The joint looks as if some big distiller is calling a press conference to announce another switch in the labels.

Funny thing how wrong a guy can be, though; I always figured that a college would be bubbling with brains. But, believe me, the only way to get a bigger collection under one roof would sure take a lot of straight-jackets.

It's a darn good thing I haven't the college education that Maw was always harping about, I can see that now. Those apes haven't any too much respect for me as it is, which makes it tough learning them anything new.

But take Jeep, now, he just seemed to know what a soft touch this joint was going to be. I'd have said I *liked* ape meat and let it go at that, after we had been stuck in this miserable burg three days.

It's a cinch this isn't far enough south to keep apes all winter—except stashed in a snow bank like cordwood until needed.

I was figuring to myself how long eighteen apes would last the three of us... Bumpy an' me an' Jeep... so I think maybe I didn't understand right when Jeep says, "Tarzan, my boy, have you ever heard of the Law of Averages?" Art Oberholst is my right monicker; but natcherly my bein' in the ape business up to here got people callin' me Tarzan.

"Is that the one we're bustin' now?" I say sort of absently. I'm sweating trying to keep those apes rounded up

on one of them concrete islands down in the freight yards.

Jeep flips a hand at one of the trainmen to let him know we unloaded the last of the apes and they can take the cars away. He does it the way a rich millionaire would wave his chauffeur to get the Rolls-Royce to hell out of his sight. A switch engine comes up and noses our two cars off the siding and away off down the line somewhere to a cash customer.

"The Law of Averages," says Jeep, "can't be broken. If you keep on flipping a coin long enough it will turn up heads just as often as it will turn up tails."

I dredge around in my watch pocket and come up with two bits. "Here," I tell him, "you take this two bits an' go on over to the Railroad Cafe. I was sort savin' it for Bumpy, her bein' a woman an' all; but I guess you're worse off'n she is."

Jeep pushes the two bits away. "Furthermore," he says, "the Law of Averages provides that if an ape is given a typewriter, and enough paper, and enough time he will eventually write all the books that can possibly be written."

"That hardly surprises me none," I tell him. "We both of us know a helluva lot more about apes than flippin' dough aroun'. Remember how Sambo fixed the carburetor on that truck we useta travel in? An' how..."

"Washington," says Jeep. "Washington Irving."

"Hunh?" I says.

"Sambo's name is now 'Washington Irving'," explains Jeep. "He is no longer a simple auto mechanic; he is now a writer of books."

"Better take this two bits, Jeep," I tell him. "Go on over to the diner now. Bumpy an' me'll take the apes for a run to keep 'em warm. Maybe after a cuppa coffee an' a sanrich you'll cook up a idea."

"Yeah," says Bumpy, doing a little shuffle-step to keep warm, "an' be

sure an' ask the counterman if he knows some good receipts for cookin' apes."

Well, anyhow, it turns out that Jeep isn't just light in the head from not eating. He has us all fixed up to put on a free show for the kids in a big school right close by where we are on the railroad tracks. We're supposed to hang around the school, keeping the apes warm until he tells us where to bring them. He already has the loan of a school bus lined up in trade for the free show.

"And remember, Bumpy," he says, pulling on his gloves and pushing his hat back to a cocky angle with the head of his cane, "you wear slacks for this show. And a nice heavy blouse that tucks down inside the slacks."

And then he points with his cane to where you can see one corner of the school through the signal towers.

I have to admit that Jeep looks darn impressive and important as he takes off across the freight yards to town. He looks like a banker or a broker or something. I guess maybe he would be, if his old man didn't leave him this ape show along about the time Jeep come out of the army.

I HAVE BEEN with J. Pierpont Smith Shows ever since way back when it had a midway all its own. But naturally nowadays nothing can compete with movies and TV except apes. People just aren't able to keep up with the high class entertainment we used to have.

I guess maybe that's why I was sort of leery about this caper right from the time I saw where that school bus was takin' me and Bumpy and the eighteen apes. I figure at the time that maybe the apes will pick up some high-tone stuff around this college and deal us right out of show business.

But, as I have been saying right along, maybe I don't get the whole angle. It doesn't seem reasonable that all these brainy gazebos can tumble for a

gimmick such as Jeep comes up with. I figure there's a joker in the deck somewhere. And I don't like all the doozy babes drifting around the joint. It's on account of babes mostly that J. Pierpont Smith-Shows aren't in Florida a month ago.

Anyhow, it seems this Twigg College hasn't any athletic prestige whatsoever, and it's getting a lousy billing all over the country. Nobody wants to put out good dough to get into a college that isn't notorious.

So Jeep goes to see this bigshot Banker in town who's a member of the board of trustees or something, and sells him on the big idea that it isn't athletics that drags down the top billing for a college nowadays. It's Scientific Research that's the big buzz nowadays.

And Jeep goes on to point out how darn expensive it is to buy all the junk you have to have to get the Press all heated up about a Scientific Research deal. Billions it runs to, while a pretty good football team can be bought for a coupla million bucks. Which is why even a lot of the biggest colleges haven't even got a look-in on the real notoreity.

Jeep tells the banker guy he's just burnin' up a lotta opium for nothing wishing he had the dough for fitting up Twigg College with a team for everything a college has to have a team for nowadays. That's horse an' buggy thinking, Jeep tells him. He's got to get a Scientific Research deal goin' that the newspaper reporters can understand.

Naturally, it costs too much to split even the biggest and softest atoms, says Jeep; and anyhow it's been done to death. And just when he's got the banker the most discouraged and down in the mouth about the future of Twigg College, Jeep springs the business about an ape being able to write all the books in the world if you give him enough time. Jeep quotes him chapter and verse on some oldtime Science bigshot who said so.

Jeep figures that eighteen educated apes, all of who can run two typewrit-

ers at once, can do the job thirty-six times faster than just any ignorant ape dragged in off the street.

The banker tosses him a fishy, but interested, look and picks up the phone and calls out to the college to ask whether this old Greek guy—or whoever it was who cooked up the idea in the first place—is a college grad, and has a regular license to practice.

Well, when they find out who is calling out to the college, they rustle their tails around and pretty soon the banker is listening to some joker in the Math Department who tells him the gag is legit.

The banker listens just long enough to make sure some guy whose monicker would look good on a cigarette ad is really back of the gimmick, and then he cuts off the spiel and has his secretary connect him up on a conference line with three or four other bigshots.

Pretty soon he tells Jeep that the trustees of a thing called the Lydia Beemer Trowbridge Research Foundation just voted to give a granite for giving the apes a whirl. He's to report with the apes and his assistants to a Dr. Marshall Lyder Young who is the geek who takes care of the laboratories out at the college.

So here we are, apes and all, eating high on the hog and living in the Hotel Dorm which is a hotel right on the premises. We're set for the winter and not a worry in the world. Except women.

NATURALLY, everybody's always in some woman trouble, and nobody has any beef coming about the regular amount. But J. Pierpont Smith always has to have the lion's share. And, believe me, the share of woman trouble his lion gets him is too much.

Not to mention the kind of babes they have around this Twigg College. Bumpy tells me some stuff she hears around the Hotel Dorm makes the true love magazines she's always reading look like seed catalogues. Half

the time she's sort of choking an' blushing when I go up to the Hotel Dorm to pick her up. The hotel she's put up at has the same name as the one Jeep and me are stopping at. But it's a good half a mile away. I want to get that straight for the record right now. When we all put up at the same flea-bag we have to be pretty picky about the joint's having a clean name around town. And this Hotel Dorm had to be split up like the YMCA and the YWCA.

Anyhow, where me and Bumpy figure the trouble is going to come from is the Hotel Dorm she's put up at. No bellhops. No house dick. It's a touchy setup; there's a tough old babe sort of clerking and keeping things from busting wide open. But she's still only a babe; no dame has a chance with Jeep.

So all the time we're watching to see that Jeep doesn't get mixed up in the wrong Hotel Dorm, this female doctor we didn't figure on for trouble slips one over on us.

I guess it's because she calls Jeep a Mountebank right off, that I figure there's no soap there. Naturally, I figure Jeep ain't going to like that crack. He doesn't even have an account at any bank. Unless maybe she's giving him a dig about the banker guy getting us this touch. Otherwise, I'd of picked her right off for a trouble-maker on account of her looks and all. What this Dr. Cynthia Coleman Kelly looks like is something that got left behind the last time Hollywood made a musical about college life.

Anyway, what would a doctor be doing in the English Department of a College? Maybe in the Math Department a flock of students are always keeling over; or probably a lot of students get blown up in the Chemistry Department. But what could happen to a healthy kid studying something simple and natural like English?

I guess I just didn't stop to figure this fishy angle because Jeep and her tangle horns right off the pat.

Actually, she didn't have any beef coming. Those apes were a sensation right from the start. After the first couple of days, I couldn't even let them out for a run around the place—in the nice big trees the joint was lousy with—but what one or two of the apes wouldn't get mixed up with the Press and get lost for maybe a hour.

It was a regular orgy. Everybody's eyes were bloodshot from flash bulbs and floods. Some guy was telling me that at Princeton and Harvard and Southern Cal. and places like that the alleys are jammed with bigshot scientists trying to attract attention. And I see an article in this here local paper where the Russians probably have five hundred apes working at writing all the books in the world first, and engineers was working out a way to heat the University of Moscow with all of them they had to burn.

So what I mean is this Dr. Cynthia Coleman Kelly ain't got no real gripe coming. This joint's getting millions of bucks worth of publicity for practically nothing. If anybody's got a beef coming, it's Jeep—who didn't figure the thing to do more than winter us free. So he hasn't any way to cash in on it except maybe pennyante things like the popcorn concession in the gallery, etcetera.

I HEAR HIM say to her, "Look, I can't see why you hold this ape business against me like this. I'm not making anything out of it except board and room. Furthermore, it seems to me that one of your own heroes, a guy named Robert Louis Stevenson, once gave it out that the way to become an ace writer is to 'play the sedulous ape' for a few years. So what's not legit with this scheme? A guy'd think you'd take an interest in a unique literary experiment... a chance to see some genuine sedulous apes being sedulous."

She gives him a cold, fishy stare and says, "There has been altogether too much of this exploitation of mass cre-

dulity in the name of scientific research. The whole world is already half crazy with fear, and ready to believe anything in the name of science. This might be the last straw."

He laughs a phoney sort of laugh, trying to kid her out of all this fancy talk, and says, "Aw, Honey, you know those apes aren't going to write anything that'll scare the world into hysteria. What've they done so far? Just a few odds and ends of sentences and paragraphs in maybe half a dozen different languages. And most of those fragments have already been identified as stuff already written and in print."

A sorta little shiver ripples around her frame, like the lights flickering on a pinball machine.

"That's just it," she says. "The fact that they have written *anything* intelligible is terrifying. Oh, Jeep, just think! What if they start writing out the histories of future wars? Or the detailed descriptions of hideous weapons of the future?"

"Be mighty handy, I'd say," says Jeep. "Give us the edge all around. Put us way out ahead."

"Do you think for one minute," she says sort of scornful, "that the Russians couldn't have regiment of apes at work this very minute?"

"So what?" says Jeep. "Let one Red ape write one sentence that doesn't jibe with Politboro policies and he's a dead ape. Since they work on the Law of Averages, no ape could write at random for more than a week without typing out his own death warrant."

"Oh, we're just being too hysterically silly," she says. "Of course, it's all a mad dream. But the point is, that if we can be carried away like this, what about all those other poor people out there? All they need is the mere suggestion that apes can accidentally write anything that could possibly be written. And now that we have proof...even such slender proof..."

"Well," says Jeep, "it's up to this

Dr. Young whether to let the sad news out or not. So why blame me?"

"But so many people know," she says. "Even though the F. B. I. has begun making a loyalty check, too many people knew already. Oh, how I wish you'd never come here!"

"Look," he says sort of hard, "there've always been apes and accidents. All the colleges in the world won't change things from going right on being just a matter of apes and accidents."

"At least we educators," she says, "keep trying to..."

"Educators!" he snorts. "I'm an educator. I can teach an ape how to run two typewriters at the same time. What can you teach any of your pupils that's on a higher plane? Me, I realize I can teach an ape just so much, and I let it go at that. I don't lose any sleep over the fact that he might not have enough sense to keep from using his knowledge out or not. So why blame me?"

"Human beings have a higher..." she begins.

"Nuts," he tells her. "A really bright sense to keep from using his knowledge for the simple reason that there's no one smart enough to teach him. He's the one who discovers the things that the second-rate minds are trained to teach to third-rate minds in the next generation. There are just so many bright minds and just so many bright apes."

"You mean," she says, sort of sore now, "that we should give up trying. Expell the whole student body, since obviously the really bright ones are on the outside somewhere discovering things we don't know, writing new kinds of novels, inventing new mechanical devices."

"I mean you should give up trying to kid yourself and everybody else as to what are the true facts of the situation," says Jeep. "You call me a mountebank...what about you? Can you really teach anyone to write a novel or how to appreciate a great poem?"

You know you can't. Either they have the capacity to create and appreciate before they come here, or they'll never have it."

"Perhaps," she says, with a sort of dainty snarl, "the secret of your success as an educator of apes is made obvious by your manners."

Then she spins around like a National Guard drill sergeant and takes on down the hall, her heels digging into the floor with a mean, sassy sort of sound.

SO AS I KEEP saying, it never did look as if we were going to have the kind of trouble out of this Dr. Cynthia Coleman Kelly that her looks would figure her to make. Jeep being kind of soft on her don't signify anything special.

Anyhow, I figured I'd find Jeep stretched out on the bunk up in his room in the Hotel Dorm. So I cut across the lawns, figuring nobody's going to yell at a guy all dressed up like a sawbones going to an emergency. I dump the roll of yellow paper on Jeep's stomach and reach down to drag the jug out from under the bunk.

"Oof!" says Jeep. "What's this?"

"Some junk Emile Zola knocks out with his feet this mornin' before workin' time," I tell him. "He's still writin' French or somethin' with his mitts, though."

For a long time Jeep didn't say anything. He reaches out his hand for the jug, and when I don't give it to him right away he doesn't notice it. So I don't pass it to him at all; he doesn't notice that, either.

"Look," he says after a long time. "Are you sure Emile Zola wrote this?"

"Sure I'm sure," I tell him. "I seen him finish it off. Maybe it ain't all there, though, on accounta he run outta paper."

"So," says Jeep. "It's complete. All this stuff at the end of the roll seems to be a report on the debate on the floor

of the North Dakota Legislature in 1923. The novel is complete. He didn't write all that this morning."

"Maybe not," I agrees. "We don't collect the stuff until the roll is finished. Whatsa diff?"

"Tarz," he says, sort of slow an' thoughtful, "better tighten up the feeding schedule on Emile Zola today. Seems to me we've got some talent there that ought to be encouraged. I understand writers do better if they don't eat so regularly."

"Okay," I says. "But don't forget we ain't payin' for all that feed. Kinda thought we'd fatten 'em up while we had the chance."

"Better come along with me, Tarz," he says, sort of dreamy. "She might not believe me."

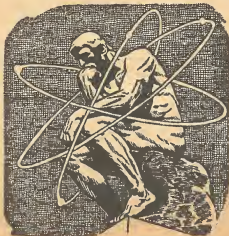
Well, we go over to this Dr. Cynthia Coleman Kelly's office. There ain't any regular doctor's tools lying aroun' the joint. Just a bunch of books and papers.

"Doctor Kelly," says Jeep sort of stiff and businesslike, "I have here a manuscript which I'd like you to evaluate."

She eyes the yellow roll, an' I guess she rekonizes where it's from. "One of the apes?"

"Emile Zola," says Jeep.

"Has Dr. Young cleared this?" she



says in a voice that sounds as if she never saw Jeep before.

"Let me remind you that those are my apes," says Jeep. "All eighteen of them. What they write belongs to me. I mention this obvious fact for reasons which will become apparent when you've read this manuscript."

"I'm afraid that I haven't the time right now to devote to the random outpourings of a Chimpanzee," she says, giving Jeep the cold eye. "Perhaps, by tomorrow, or the next..."

SHE SORT of wanders off, and she's looking at the beginning of the roll. Then she doesn't say anything for maybe an hour.

Finally, Jeeps cuts in on her. "You've seen enough to give me a rough idea," he says. "Come on. Snap out of it."

"What?" she says, sort of unconscious. Then she comes to. "Wonderful," she says. "Simply wonderful. Far and away his best yet."

"That's what I thought," says Jeep. "Not at all bad for a first novel by a...how old is Emile, Tarzan?"

"Two, goin' on three," I tells him.

"Imagine that!" says Jeep, pretending to be surprised. "Just think what he'll be able to do by the time he's five years old."

"You mean...?" gasps this dish of a doc.

"Naturally," says Jeep. "You wouldn't advise destroying a piece of prose like that, would you?"

"No, no," she says. "It should be published, of course; it must be published."

"I should imagine the royalties from a book by Emile Zola would run to a considerable sum?" says Jeep. "No doubt enough to maintain eighteen apes in Florida for quite some time? Or at least until one or the other of them turns up another commercially valuable literary property."

"But the laws..." she sputters. "You can't capitalize on a famous writer's name by using it to sign a

book written by a two-year-old ape."

"Laws?" says Jeep. "It is my impression that the name of the ape who wrote this book is Emile Zola. The Press of the entire world knows him by this name already. What court in the land would entertain the ridiculous plea that I taught him how to write novels, just so that I could capitalize on the coincidence of his name?"

"No," she says, sort of winded. "No, of course not. You couldn't."

"As I explained before," he nods.

"But," she says. "But what about the Lydia Beemer Trowbridge Research Foundation experiment?"

"I have no contract," says Jeep; "merely a grant for the maintenance of the apes for a period of some months. They remain my apes to do with as I please. And what pleases me right now is to put this little by-product on the market to the highest bidder, and use the proceeds to retire with my apes to Florida where you and I will begin to lead the literary life."

"You and I," she says sort of vague. I'm hoping she won't get the idea at all. But Jeep explains it to her.

"Don't act so innocent," says Jeep. "You've heard of marriage; nothing has come out of the laboratories yet to take its place."

"Marriage," she says. She just says it, giving it no particular meaning, one way or the other.

"Well," says Jeep, "doesn't this pretty well crush all opposition? Here I'm giving up the Lydia Beemer Trowbridge touch because you've convinced me that it's dangerous to allow the academic, scientific mind to trifle with natural laws. And you've already explained quite clearly why you couldn't consider giving up the ivy-clad halls for carnival canvas. Well, what's wrong with the literary life in Florida?"

"But you're not a writer," she says in a dull sort of voice. She wasn't arguing. It was as if she just wanted to hear herself cover all the points.

"The Critic and Editor," he says, making it sound big, "very frequently live the literary life on a larger scale than the actual writer. Furthermore, I can't read by myself all that eighteen apes can write. I'll need someone to help me decide which manuscripts are new to world of letters; and which of them may be given to the world without doing it too much damage."

"Jeep, darling," she says, still in a flat daze.

"I thought you would grasp the unthinkable alternatives," he says, taking a good grip on her.

"Tarzan," he says to me, "you'd better go give the apes a medical check-up. The gallery will be full by now. And keep this strictly under your hat; you're in line for a nice, fat editorial job, my boy."

But me, I don't want to be an editor. It's been sort of gnawing at my mind that those apes figured out how to

do something I didn't teach them.

I figure if those apes can write books, well so can Tarzan Oberholst, who taught them everything they ever knew.

Sure it was me who trained those apes. Old J. Pierpont Smith himself was a pretty good ape man; but Jeep he doesn't know from beans about apes. He's just showing off in front of Dr. Cynthia Coleman Kelly when he tells her he was the one who taught those apes how to run a typewriter. I'm the guy that trains the apes, see? An' I can do anything they can do. Except maybe not with my feet.

So if Jeep tries to tell you it was Edgar Rice Burroughs who wrote this story for me, you'll be able to figure the percentage.

It just so happens that it's Jeep who gave the apes the new names in the first place. And 'Edgar' ain't no name a guy who knows apes is going to give a she ape.

"OUT OF THIS WORLD" says Daily News

If you read the New York Daily News for August 11, 1954, you might have noticed a full page devoted to science fiction magazines. And among the titles whose covers were reproduced was our own FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION!

The new issue features complete novelets and short stories by

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FUTURE

SCIENCE FICTION



Limitations of Science Fiction

"SCIENCE FICTION may stimulate our imaginations by postulating developments in the future, but it can add nothing to our knowledge or understanding of human nature, and it is with the latter that all thinking men are chiefly concerned." So ends an article in the *London Times Literary Supplement*, Friday September 17, 1954, page xlii. As is to be expected, there have already been some sharp dissents by various science-fictionists, and doubtless more are to be expected. However, none of the replies that I have seen so far have attempted an appraisal of the situation, being content merely to say "Tain't so" somewhat shrilly and suggest that the un-named author of the article from which this quotation was taken is more to be pitied than censured.

The issue raises a number of rather interesting questions, however. (1) Why the defensive attitude on the part of science-fictionists, generally? (2) Should science fiction be considered as a special category of fiction? (3) Is the estimate given above valid in part, or as a whole, and if in part, where is it sound?

I do not pretend to know the answers to any degree of finality, but offer the following suggestions.

(1) Most science-fictionists come to this form of fiction during their early teens, before their standards of literary judgement are matured to any large extent. A new and wonderful world is opened up to them through the sweep and escape-potential and wish-fulfilling quality of this type of fiction. Science fiction becomes an object of infatuation, and one's critical faculties are hardly at their height under such conditions. With the passing of time, infatuation sometimes gives way to more or less permanent affection, wherein a certain amount of fault can be found with the object but the emotional coloring remains.

Many science fictionists have had to cope with parents' disapproval of this type of reading matter, partly because (up to very recently) it was mostly obtainable only in pulp magazines—still not very respectable in the adult world, and particularly in the pedagogical sections of it—and partly because of the lurid and unconventional nature of a great deal of it. A hundred years ago, the puritanical frown upon "novel reading" of any kind was very much with us; when I was going to school, "dime novels" were not considered proper reading

matter and the phrase included pulp fiction of any variety. (One could still find copies of paperbound Nick Carter, Frank Merriwell, and Horatio Alger novels in second hand stores.) And parents were—and still are—often embarrassed to find the youngsters ardent fans of reading matter they, their neighbors and friends consider somewhat queer.

As a result, many science fictionists had to justify their choice of reading matter to the extent of persuading their elders that it wasn't what it appeared to be from the gaudy covers on the old *Amazing Stories*, *Wonder Stories*, *Astounding Stories of Super-Science*, etc., but that it was really highgrade material—educational, etc. In many cases, the young fan had to get his science fiction homework done surreptitiously, and there was always a certain amount of guilt larded in with the pleasure.

Necessity for more or less constant justification, and guilt-feeling, can set up a pretty neat defensive pattern, and once that type of pattern is established, the mechanism often continues to operate long after the initial necessity for it has passed. I don't say that this accounts for all the tender and touchy skins amongst science fictionists when their reading matter is criticized, but it can certainly account for a great deal of it. All this could be dismissed with a shrug once any explanation is accepted, were it not for one thing; the defense mechanism makes it impossible for many science fictionists to examine science fiction with the degree of objectivity needed to make a meaningful evaluation of their considerable data on the subject.

(2) Science fiction, per se, has been labelled as a specialized branch of literature only recently, considering the span of recorded Western Literature—for only about thirty years. It is an artificial category, created for commercial purposes by Hugo Gernsback—created with love, let us add, but it would not have lasted long without a large supply of cash customers.

As a result, instead of the occasional works of imagination, satire, philosophy, etc., (tabbed "science fiction" by fans, after the event) which had been appearing throughout the course of centuries, there came a steady outpouring of works fitting into the various editorial and publishers requirements for this specialized brand of popular magazine fare. By and large the product has not been much worse than the

usual run of popular (pulp) fiction throughout the past thirty years—though at the same time, it hasn't been as greatly superior to the general run of adventure fiction as aficionados make it out to have been. Without the special pleading of the faithful—of all varieties of taste and temperament—only a small fraction of the output that has survived (remained available and in consumption, that is) up to 1955 would be with us at all.

SINCE THE cult of science-fiction-as-literature has attracted a number of influential persons (influential in the sense that they are able to promote it through publishing anthologies, etc.) quite a large list of solid literary works—recognized as such, that is, before Gernsback—have been captured by aficionados and are exultantly displayed as early examples of the art. The tree of ancestor worship produces weird fruit, and some of the weirdest are such authors as Plato, Lucian, Sir Thomas More, Rabelais (for still others, see Derleth's "Beyond Time & Space") packaged in the science fiction basket. This is understandable; it would be difficult to make a case for the "eternal" value of science fiction were the attorneys for the case limited to the magazine—and more recently, the book—output of the past thirty years. (Gernsback reprinted many of H. G. Wells' short stories, and a few of his romances and socio-philosophical novels as examples of the type of fiction meant. Unfortunately, enthusiasm could not by itself produce the craftsmanship and insight into human behavior that Wells had before he started writing this type of story.)

(3) The author of the *Times* article has rigged the question somewhat by giving a very restrictive definition of science fiction, and it is difficult to dispute such matters since no science fictionist to date has come forth with a definition acceptable to all the others. However, I think we can find a flaw in the (assumed) definition given here—that science fiction is necessarily concerned with inventions (gadgets) and adventure, almost to the exclusion of every other consideration to be found in general literature. Certainly a high percentage of examples can be pointed to, but as *Sporting Life* would say, "It ain't necessarily so."

Let's see if we can find a few general elements in science fiction which seasoned followers would agree do belong in a general definition. (I confess right now to rigging myself. It follows from this that anyone who didn't accept these elements is obviously not a "seasoned follower of science fiction.")

First of all, since this is *fiction* we're talking about, science fiction must include the basic elements of any other type of fiction. Secondly, since our subject is *science* fiction, then a consideration of the relationship between some aspects or categories of "science" and human society must

form a core of the story. This, as we know, is extremely variable. The relationship may include a given "social order" or aspects thereof; it may be concentrated only on the individual or individuals taking the larger social order for granted; it may explore aspects of human nature by dealing with their presence or absence in mythical "non-humans," and so on. Third, the "science" element cannot be merely a depiction of what is known, or what exists here and now; speculation in regard to the "science"—the "what if such-and-such were different"—must come in. (I have tried to phrase this in such a way so that a novel like "Arrowsmith," even if written today by a science fiction author for a science fiction market, could not qualify. On the other hand, I'm afraid this must include a great deal of work by Ray Bradbury which—because I consider it bad despite Ray's remarkable craftsmanship—I'd like to exclude. Pseudo-science, however we may look at it, does represent a type of relationship between society and the real thing; and regardless of whether Bradbury's pictures are caricatures, they do present real attitudes. The stories would not be essentially different if the technical absurdities had not been perpetrated.

CAN SCIENCE FICTION add anything to our knowledge and understanding of human nature? We can only answer in reference to specific works of science fiction, rather than in reference to the abstraction. And to answer in the affirmative one need point only to one example, one story which the author intended as science fiction. Mr. Tyler to the contrary—see the February *Science Fiction Quarterly*, "Perfection is No Trifle"—we cannot take such a novel as Huxley's "Brave New World" as science fiction, however tempting. All the evidence indicates that Huxley had no such intentions. I think we have an example close at hand: "They'd Rather Be Right," by Mark Clifton and Frank Riley. (*Astounding Science Fiction*, August-November 1954). It is too soon to assess the extent to which this story fulfills the requirement, but I think it can qualify.

I do not mean by this that "They'd Rather Be Right" is a "great novel," nor is the requirement fulfilled only by masterworks of literature. Many works of fiction, (significant in this regard) fall short of the highest rank. Some are lesser works of authors who are best known for a single or a few superior achievements. (Melville, for example, is listed among the greats for "Moby Dick;" but some of his lesser novels are considered worth knowing, too.) Many fine works have been produced by authors who nonetheless did not produce a single work of the highest rank.

But should science fiction be considered as a limited field of expression? It is not so by definition, except to the extent that all fiction is to be considered limited.

[Turn To Page 98]

The ultimate in audience — participation shows!



There were one hundred percent genuine, hungry carnivores around.

YOU RISK YOUR LIFE

by Joseph Slotkin

WHEN THE Broadcasters' Association of Democracy, Inc. telecast its first nationwide surgi-drama in color, Pat Price, who was watching the screen across the mahogany in the *Wish-A-Willie Bar* on Wilshire near Vermont, got a brain-storm that came close to revolution-

izing the scientific outlook, and certainly *did* make show business history.

Pat Price was one of the sharpest promoters in the Hollywood public relations game. He was in the Wilshire Boulevard bar mooning around for inspiration for a kinescoped show he was building up into a package, when

he saw the sheeted, anesthetized body as the telelens saw it.

Then he saw it as his miasmatic Muse saw it.

It was a simple program, really—Actually, one of the few “public service” broadcasts the B. A. D., Inc. had room for, after it had sold all its top time spots to agencies procuring for deodorants, laxatives, diuretics, anti-histamines and palliatives.

True, the B. A. D. secretly hoped to secure a tie-up with a manufacturer of surgical equipment, or of a line of hospital supplies, as a result of this surgi-drama. Ostensibly, though, that night the telecamera was focussed upon that brilliantly-lit hospital surgery amphitheatre and its Stanislavskian-attitudinized doctors, nurses, and orderlies, purely in order “to demonstrate to the public at large the immense strides our modern medical men are making in protecting the health and lives of *the pee-pul!*”

At least, that was what the grinning announcer with the Panchro Number Seven smeared on his face was saying.

Pat didn't see the possibilities—the gigantic, beautiful possibilities of this form of entertainment—immediately. As he sipped his Martini, he was as curious as any of the other imbibers about the way those white-clad and green-clad figures would perform upon the “star” of the program: a small, exposed square of pale pink skin, shaven to an embarrassing nakedness, and filling the entire twenty inches of the cathode screen for a moment as the first incision was made.

It happened so quickly. The deft, slim surgical hands, those latex-clad fingers as sensitive as the tendrils of a tropical vine, made that first swift stroke, and a thin pencil line of red was drawn for a moment on the pink-white square, to be erased immediately by other lightning tendrils.

But as the flap of skin was drawn back, and the pathological organ ex-

posed—as catheters, clamps, sponges, forceps, sutures and scalpels darted in and out of that full-color picture tube, Pat lifted his olive out by the toothpick, lifted it up. As he opened his mouth, his eyes strayed from the tele-screen, glancing across the bar, and the olive eased off the trembling pine splinter, dropped and rolled along the mahogany like a marble down a sewer.

He saw an enthralled audience. A “hypnotized house”. The fat man next to him was unconscious of the fact that his cigar had leaked ashes into his Scotch, and his thick lips drooled unblottedly onto the plaid vest rising and falling rapidly with his bulging midsection. A woman with a red feather in her hat was gripping the feather tightly, and rhythmically pulling it back and forth, her eyes narrowed to thin slits as she watched the telescreen.

Even the slot-machine-faced broad-shouldered bartender, who was in the act of pulling the cork from a bottle of rare vintage continued the circling motion of his corkscrew; continued it until the metal tip had gone clear through the cork and was twirling brightly above the lapping liquid.

The surgi-drama was over quickly, and the camera panned to the chief surgeon's face for a closeup as he was removing his mask, then dollied back to reveal the attendants wheeling the patient from the green-walled room. The grinning panchro was back again, in his unctious, “Public Service” announcement promising more of the same the following week.

But Pat Price, his sense of promotion clicking like a Geiger Counter, had already left the bar.

PAT WAS A persuasive character, and Osborne Associates were ripe for a change. There had been too many audience-participation shows that were losing their precious Hooper-ratings—despite the immense giveaways and the increasing audacity of

the "stunts" perpetrated upon the willing "participants".

As Pat had said to Ollie Osborne, "Ollie, what have you got to lose? A percentage? What has happened to the agency business when great geniuses like yourself refuse to gamble a percentage?"

"What has the network got to lose? Its license? Remember those hearings back in 1941? The FCC's Report on Chain Broadcasting? The suits? How long did it take—remember?—from the time the first report came out, to the Supreme Court decision?"

While Ollie fingered his Countess Maritza tie, Pat leaned over the desk and held up four Martini-stained fingers. "Four years, brother. Think that over; four years to grow fat on."

Ollie, who was already tipping the scales at a modest 280, protested, albeit weakly, since the genius gimmick had had its effect. "But how we gonna get this thing started, Pat? And who's gonna submit to gettin' the works like you say—?"

Pat chidingly dug his fingers through the padding of the Bronzini jacket and kneaded the padding of Ollie's unbronzed shoulder. "Ollie, what was the last stunt pulled on the Lardo soap show last Tuesday? Remember what Harry Gatling, the m.c., did to that couple from Nebraska? Tied 'em together with strips of raw cowhide and had 'em wait for a Sunset bus during the noon rush. Remember what happened when those hunks of hide began to shrink in the sun?"

Ollie's shoulder wriggled protestingly under the promoter's clutch, but his plump cheeks began to crease into a broad smile.

A look of triumph stole over Pat's face. "And they weren't even married, remember?"

They both hesitated then, and looked at each other. Both were remembering the headlines in the papers the next morning, and the sensation

of the final court decision: *Since the plaintiffs freely and of their own accord, and solely for the purpose of self-enjoyment as in a game, gave their consent freely and without coercion to engage in the aforementioned activities, and furthermore attached their signatures to a lawful waiver of responsibility, fully aware of the possible outcome of their venture into such game, we find that there has been no liability on the part of the defendants, and hereby find for the defendants, whom we adjudge free of liability and not guilty of the charges as brought. Case dismissed.*

That decision had made history for show business. If knife throwers in night clubs, whip snappers at fairs, stunt skaters in theatres, wire walkers in circuses, fire throwers at outings, had all been afraid to call for audience volunteers before, they now found their fears completely allayed.

And *The Nation's Business* magazine published a little article about two Korean veterans who had snowballed a small G. I. business loan into a sizable fortune, printing the most weasel-worded release-forms ever smacked between the plates of a Kluge Press. *Time*, then *Newsweek*, followed suit.

For a time, however, there had been a tendency for studio volunteers to hang back when the "master of cemeteries", as he was sometimes now playfully called, asked for participants.

But the public's memory being a short one, show business and television were soon back on their feet—even though more and more of the "volunteers" found themselves off theirs.

SO WHAT WAS Pat Price's proposition to Ollie Osborne? He hadn't begun by outlining his scheme immediately. Instead, like a wise promoter, he had started by giving a brief history of what it was that made for good show business:

Whether it was "good theatre", with Judith Anderson displaying her hands red with the blood of her two slain sons to a delightedly gasping modern audience; an assortment of ancient Romans chewing contentedly on the first century equivalent to hot dogs as they were "wowed" by the panorama of disemboweled martyred victims and bloody-pawed lions; knights-in-armor delivering the coup-de-grace for some giggling maiden's sleeve; Dionysians slit the throat of a goat in a Greek amphitheatre; John Wayne in "The Sands of Iwo Jima"; or the cozy little parties of the Spanish Inquisitors and the Hitlerian hordes in their Dachaus or Nurembergs, the prime element seemed to be excitement, very liberally mixed with blood—preferably someone else's.

"And what makes you feel so good when you hear the traffic accident statistics, complete with details? What sells a million copies of a tabloid better than a good axe murder? How come the pix mags play up the Katyn Forest massacres so much? Aristotle's 'catharsis of the emotions'? Serutan, brother, Serutan!"

Ollie Osborne had agreed, although he had frowned at the mention of Hitlerian hordes, and at the Katyn Forest pitch, had nervously fingered the American Legion button in his lapel.

"So you've got to have something with guts in it. That's what's wrong with show business, with television today," Pat hammered his point home.

"Nothing but a copy of oldtime radio shows, with m.c.'s making fun of some bald-headed guy when a pretty girl in tights comes out and sits on his lap, and his wife is in the audience. Sure, they make fools out of people, and the audience thinks it's a boofola. But they're getting tired of the slapstick."

He paused, and leaned over the desk, eyes narrowed. "They want blood."

While Ollie shuddered, Price told

him of what he had just seen on the video screen at the bar on Wilshire Boulevard.

"Sure," Ollie agreed. "A surgical operation, that's a natural. First time the FCC's agreed to a public performance. But that's public service, my friend. How are you goin'—?"

"Can't you just see it?" Pat waved his arms. "A big arena—maybe the Los Angeles Coliseum, the Pasadena Rose Bowl, or the Hollywood Bowl—thousands of people, there to pay tribute to the prime quality of American enterprise and bravery that has made this country what it is today! Brother, if the FCC doesn't eat that up, I'll eat your cigar!"

"Why, we'll get a medal—a nice gold one! Maybe even a Pulitzer Prize for helping to develop a greater and better living American."

Ollie Osborne had reached for another cigar, and at the word "living" he clipped off the panetela's end. "Sounds good. How does it pay off?"

"There'll be a million sponsors standing in line to sign up when they find out we've got a program idea that's the first new twist since the time that radio m.c. put a ladies' corset on over his clothes—even greater than the time Dooly Forbes emptied a lady's pocketbook before the telecamera and found she was carrying a .38 to kill her hubby's sweetie, and that sweetie turned out to be that gal who sang on the show.

"Remember how the camera panned away from Dooly, the lady and the thrush? And all you heard was the shot and the screams? Brother, this will be better, believe me."

A few more references to Ollie's "genius", and a program format was born. Soon after, Lardo Soap announced a new, immense teleshow, with the premiere at the newly-constructed Lardo Soap Coliseum.

Details of the show were classified "Top Secret", because Pat Price, who was working on the promotion, fig-

ured it would be more of a sensation when the show did finally break.

HE WAS right. The night of the premiere, searchlights played over a vast audience. Each lady had been presented with a free orchid corsage, and each gentleman with a carnation. The tele-announcer stepped before a battery of the new cold lights, and to a hundred and eighty million people all over America announced in full color: "Lardo soap, the soap that gets under your skin and stays there, presents the first of a new series entitled, *You Risk Your Life!*"

There was a stir in the audience. But the commercials had already begun, and the guests settled back as the announcer, in attitude of prayerful reverence with a tense, devoted, over-anxious look on his panchromatized face—demanded, begged, pleaded, whined like a puppy prostrating itself for a pat on its wriggling posterior, for the womanhood of America, yes, of the world, not to smell bad when it was so easy to have the appeal of a Turkish harem with Lardo Soap, every ingredient fresh from nature itself.

As he said the sacred words, he involuntarily clutched his checked jacket over the heart, his head bowed slightly in a moment of meditative devotion. The watching audience saw four girls in bathing suits who were singing the commercial, climax the jingle with something that old-time radio could never master: four pronounced pelvic jolts toward the four corners of the world, signifying that Lardo Soap covered the earth.

The time had come for the unmasking of the program's format. There had been volunteers picked earlier from the studio audience, and now here they were, determined to do or die. Yes, to do or—and the announcer paused dramatically; it may have been the slight chill in the Los Angeles smog, but he pronounced the word with such grave portent—*die*.

Then he introduced the master of ceremonies for the new show. It was Dooly Forbes, and there may have been a few who remembered the little drama in one of Dooly Forbes' earlier shows which had ended with a shot and a scream. A real shot, and a real scream. Those few leaned forward a trifle uneasily, a little more expectant, for Hollywood type casting was in the blood of the audience, too.

What happened next is, of course, video history. There had been ten contestants. The show began in a relaxed manner, but with plenty of snap. A few buckets of ice water fell; a few pies were thrown.

Pat Price, sitting in tuxedoed splendor with Ollie Osborne in the sponsor's booth, nodded knowingly to the agency man, indicating the slightly bored expression of the thousands in the audience. Ollie nodded back, then raised his right hand, holding his middle finger over his index finger in the universal gesture of "here goes nothing but here's hoping."

The huge, movable platform of the Coliseum's stage began to slide. The audience gasped. Revealed was a reproduction of an ancient amphitheatre at one end of which were five snarling lions and two growling tigers, full-grown, hungry, savage, menacing—but caged.

After the first shock, when the audience realized the beasts were caged, it settled back to enjoy the spectacle, at least, for the scenic designers had done an inspired job, and the lighting was superb.

Now, Dooly Fumble was saying, America would prove what made it great. Just as in days of old, knights were sent on dangerous missions by their lords to prove their bravery and gain the hand of their lady loves or some other sought-after prize, these volunteers were to go after a prize much greater than any might imagine—but the dangers were real, and there

was no telling what the consequences would be.

ANY SCHOOLCHILD knows the details of that first program and what followed.

There are even line drawings in some of the schoolbooks of those first contestants (all photographs were censored), as they sought, one by one, to climb the artificial crag upon which was the key which meant that the winner would receive one million dollars in cash.

And the sound of Dooly pulling the rope which released the savage lions and tigers from their cages is still known as the squeak that was heard around the world—for someone had forgotten to oil the pulleys, or perhaps it was just another bit of inspired showmanship.

The lawsuits, initiated by the survivors of the deceased volunteers, are history, as are the decisions of the courts. Pat Price had been right again. In each case: *We cannot but find for the defendants, since there was willful participation with full knowledge of the possible consequences, as the signatures on the attached releases attest...* Case dismissed.

Of course the Federal Communications Commission started an inquiry immediately, as Pat had known they would. By the end of the first year, 97 witnesses were introduced and heard—their evidence filled 8713 pages; 707 exhibits were introduced; the testimony and exhibits filled 29 volumes.

The stockholders of Lardo Soap Co., Inc. & Ltd. were delighted, that first year, at the announcement that there would be a return of two hundred per cent of their investments. Nine agencies attempted shows in imitation of *You Risk Your Life*, and up to the time of the show which put an end to the "Blood Cycle" as it was dubbed by Variety, the B.A.D. had sewed up every national sponsor in the country, merely by promising a

chance at the option of their juiciest property.

The show which put an end to the "Blood Cycle" was one of the *Risk Your Life* series, and to tell the truth, Pat Price had already figured out that this might be the last show.

"Maybe it's too big," he told Ollie Osborne after the conference on the coming thirteen-week cycle.

"So if it's too big, we drop it; what have we got to lose?"

Pat agreed. The very next day he had his interview with the head of the Atomic Energy Commission. It was very short, since he had done the field work months before. Or, rather, a little, stoop-shouldered, hollow-chested and big-browed recent graduate of the UCLA Drama Department had done the field work, aided by a Mark IV type computer and two Geiger Counters.

Pat knew the world needed energy desperately, since the coal, petroleum and uranium supplies were near exhaustion; and if this public need could be linked with Pat's promotion scheme it might get the B.A.D. out of a bad spot. The "Blood Cycle" cast was coming up in the Supreme Court after seven years, and a decision was expected any month now. If they could link *You Risk Your Life* with "public service" then all might be as before—or, at any rate, all might be forgiven.

The scheme depended only on the consent of the A.E.C. head. And Pat, being a persuasive person, found the rather kindly, bespectacled man with the drooping mustache and sagging shoulders a very easy prey for his idea.

AGAIN THERE was little buildup for the night of the performance. There was a double reason this time. "Top Secret" was stamped across the folders containing all written material to be used in *You Risk Your Life*. The F. B. I. had given everyone concerned, including the floor manager, a



thorough loyalty check. Armed guards and quiet, unobtrusive, wiry little men in Brooks Brothers suits scrutinized everyone entering or leaving the Osborne Agency.

For this one program alone, all the Hollywood writers were relieved of the assignment, and several promising young graduates of the Pasadena Playhouse who had had a year's briefing at Caltech were assigned.

The program was again scheduled for the Lardo Soap Coliseum—a greatly enlarged Coliseum, with a huge back wall screening some gigantic object around which armed guards patrolled in twenty-four hour shifts.

Again the brilliant searchlights played over the audience, beflowered as before with free orchids and carnations, and generous samples of Lardo Soap had been passed out to everyone by that year's Rose Parade queen, who was wearing a fascinating ensemble concocted to look like a batch of Lardo Soap bubbles.

Again the announcer made his cadaverous entrance, gave his Gordon Moore's English Toothpaste grin, and then his sepulchral announcement: "You Risk Your Life!"

Ollie and Pat watched from the glassed-in sponsor's booth as the program got off to a slow start with a few volunteers being sacrificed to the old chestnut of hunting for a million dollars in a forest full of lions and tigers, or swimming across a crocodile-filled pool, or wrestling an eighteen-foot python. Ollie nodded again, as he

and Pat watched the faces of the spectators become masked with boredom.

Then Dooly Forbes stepped forward as a blood-red curtain swept across the scene of a contestant being squashed by a Grizzly bear. He held up his hands, and his usually-comic face took on the almost religious look usually reserved for the sacred words, "Lardo Soap."

"Tonight, ladies and gentlemen," he began, "we have an event that is truly out of this world. But first—" and he introduced the sagging-shouldered head of the A.E.C. While the audience fidgeted, there followed a brief interview.

It was revealed that the earth's resources were almost depleted; that energy from atomic piles might have been possible, but there just wasn't enough fissionable material left.

Several of the ladies in the rear started to get up and head for the Sepulveda exit, but stopped as the explanation went on. Of course, everyone knew that the sun's energy came from the continued atomic disintegration of its own matter in a perpetual hydrogen explosion. There was a possibility that the sun itself was a source of energy for the earth—if a way could be found to link hands, as it were, with the sun itself!

The audience stopped fidgeting, and the ladies returned to their seats as sag-shoulders said that perhaps it was even possible that the sun itself was not unavailable, but that the only way to find out would be to try to get to the sun and establish a base.

At those words, on cue, the giant wall in the rear slowly began to sink into the earth. The audience tensed. There was a scream. Two men swallowed their free cigars, and four women fainted.

REVEALED was a gigantic rocket ship, on a platform, ready for launching. Sag-shoulders turned to

Dooly, who took up the gauntlet. This ship, he said, could make the trip to the sun, since it was powered with atomic energy. But once there, if it could get back, the machines inside would automatically have set up the link the A. E. C. needed to draw energy from the sun practically forever.

The chances were— "What would you say, professor?"

The old man peered over his spectacles. "About ten per cent."

"That's what my agent gets, and he's satisfied," Dooly cracked, and the tension was broken, as the audience laughed.

Then the volunteer chosen from the studio audience came out from behind a screen. He was dressed in a shimmering, helmeted space suit, designed by Adrian and decorated with the autographs of two thousand science-fiction fans from the world's fan clubs.

It was explained that the volunteer was to ride in the ship; when it landed, he would wait ten minutes while the machines in the nose did their work. Then when the ship had automatically turned about, he would press one lever.

As soon as he pressed the lever, the ship would rise up from the sun, and return to Earth. Unless the sun burned him up before then.

But what a glorious prize he would receive if he succeeded! Five million dollars in cash, and as much Lardo Soap products as he needed for the rest of his life.

While the audience watched, the telecameras swung about, focussed on the giant ship, and the small figure clambering into it. The figure waved clumsily in its fancy space suit, then vanished into the metal giant. A cover clamped shut. Counting slowly, dropping a cake of Lardo Soap into a gold-plated dishpan for each second, Dooly started backwards from ten.

"Minus nine, minus eight, minus seven..."

In Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, a dairy farmer made garbled sounds to his wife, clutched at his heart and pitched forward in front of his Silvertone, as the telescreen was filled with a blinding flash of unearthly light, and the loudspeaker shrilled like a banshee.

The giant ship rose from the earth, majestically, in a beautiful arc, and headed into space. The millions watching saw a speck dwindling among the stars.

The next day, astronomers at Palomar perceived a disturbance of mild proportions, too infinitesimal to be described as a sunspot, upon the surface of the sun. That was all; the incident occurred around noon.

The volunteer never came back.

It was too much of an anticlimax. But it had been the last of the current thirteen weeks of the "*Risk Your Life*" series. The FCC had been awarded a favorable decision by the Supreme Court, and had issued a restraining order against the B. A. D.

And, as Pat Price pointed out to Ollie Osborne at the bar on Wilshire Boulevard that night, the "Blood Cycle" was just about wrung dry of Audience Appeal, anyhow.

"You can milk a good thing just so far," Pat philosophized. Then he stopped, and again a Martini olive dropped onto the polished mahogany and rolled like a marble along a sewer.

"Which gives me an idea for a switcheroo. 'From Blood to Milk'! How do you like that?" He grasped Ollie's lapel and tugged gently.

"Now listen to this, will this get the full approval of the FCC, or will this get the full approval of the FCC?"

He leaned forward and whispered, for Hollywood pirates were known to frequent these bars on Wilshire Boulevard. "As a *public service*, the Lardo Soap Company presents: '*A Mother Every Minute!*'"



READIN' and WRITHIN'

BOOK REVIEWS

by Damon Knight



GORE VIDAL'S "MESSIAH," now available as the first Ballantine 35¢ reprint, is a hard book to assess. To begin with, it has a quality so uniformly absent from science-fantasy novels that it comes here as a shock: conviction, the feeling that the story is in some deep sense true. This means that Vidal's plot is almost beyond criticism—the story does not impress you as plot, but as something that happened.

It follows that whatever means have been used to achieve so (for us) rare an effect must be accounted good means: yet in several ways this is an appallingly bad book.

It has the cardinal badness, it is dull. I don't mean the story, which is a perfect thing, but the story-as-told. Like Jessamyn West in "Star Short Novels," Vidal has chosen for his narrator an old man, near death, recording the events of the story many years afterward. His recollections have the blurred light of decades on them; faces are in shadow; irrelevancies intrude; and around this mass of unsorted material the narrator, tireless and uncritical, winds the string of his endless Jamesian sentences... Well, this is all very much like life, but it is hard not to wish it were a little more like art.

I mention these things because I think the reader ought to be warned that he has an eight-and-a-half-page introduction—full of teutonic philosophizing, and printed in italics—to get through before the story even begins; that he won't find out the narrator's name till page 30; and that it isn't until page 48—almost exactly one-quarter

of the way into the book—that reader and narrator meet the central character, the Messiah, for the first time.

Against this, there's an occasional flash of wit; good potshots at Episcopalian bishops, Jungian analysts, and other sitting ducks; an astonishing slow delineation of character that turns cardboard figures into creatures as obstinately themselves as anyone you know; and finally the story itself—simple, powerful, disturbing—and, I think, unforgettable.

THE QUARTER'S most peculiar item, though, is Jeffery Lloyd Castle's *SATELLITE E ONE* (Dodd, Mead, \$3). This one was written by someone without the remotest idea of what a novel is: it's three-quarters treatise—all very correct and British, some of it remarkably astute—about the probable development of a space station project.

It is also, apparently, a book written by someone who has not read much of the previous literature on the subject; the publishers describe him laconically as "a scientist," which I suppose means that he's an archaeologist or something equally irrelevant. Perhaps because of this, on the two occasions when the book suddenly (and briefly) becomes a dramatic story, although the situations are from stock—in one, the pilot of the first manned spaceship is trapped on it and has to be rescued; in the other, a man in a spacesuit drifts helplessly—Castle has handled them with unusual freshness and vigor.

The only thing that unites the jumbled pieces of this book is the temporal progress of the space station project, and evidently Castle thought that was enough. It's written in fits and snatches, past tense changing to present, hero's viewpoint interrupted by narrator's, like an amateur film in which the action stops at interesting places to let the announcer harangue you.

This narrator, one of the three people who take turns telling the story, spends half his time explaining the ABC's of space-flight at great, muddled length, and nearly the other half spinning out a fantastic series of bright ideas—e.g., two brand new and wonderfully ingenious methods of simulating free-fall conditions on earth; a logical but slightly breathtaking scheme for making use of waste products in the space station (they're delicious); an absolutely convincing fugue undergone by the narrator when he first experiences free flight in a long closed tube—apparently he thinks he's a sperm again—and a lot more.

And yet, particularly in the early part of the book, this same writer delivers himself of one scientific and logical howler after another. Hero #1, for instance, wears an Egyptian-mummy-case kind of spacesuit not equipped with direct vision; instead, he has two little television screens, one for each eye, at a range of about one inch (1). Wearing this monstrosity, he is loaded into the rocket face down for the 8-g takeoff—meaning of course that he takes the weight on his well-padded facial bones, ribcage, anterior pelvic bones, kneecaps and so on—while the delicate, fragile back and rump are tucked up out of harm's way.

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN'S eighth Scribner's novel, **THE STAR BEAST** (\$2.50) is, like six of the others, only nominally a juvenile. Two of the major characters are under age, but neither of them is the hero of this book; nor, in spite of his/her vast appeal, is LummoX, the star beast. The hero is Mr. Kiku, Permanent Under Secretary for Spatial Affairs, surely the most likeable and charming administrator in the entire universe. When LummoX (a six-ton pet) starts out innocently enough to eat a few rose bushes and a mastiff, and ends by involving the whole planet in the threat of annihilation, it's Kiku who has to pick up all the pieces. It's a pure delight to watch him at work. Heinlein's interest, as always, is in *The Man Who Knows How*, other types appearing only as caricatures—and if this makes for a distorted view of humanity, it also makes for close-textured, fascinating writing. Stories about know-nothings inevitably repeat the same stock motions; the repertory of competence is inexhaustible.

This is a novel that won't go bad on you. Many of science fiction's triumphs, even from as little as ten years ago, are unreadable today; they were jerrybuilt, not meant for re-reading. Heinlein is durable. I've read this story twice so far—once in the *Fan-*

tasy & Science Fiction serialized version, once in hard covers—and expect to read it again sooner or later, for pleasure. I don't know any higher praise.

FREDRIC BROWN'S ANGELS AND SPACESHIPS (Dutton, \$2.75) is everything a Brown collection ought to be, and which his "Space On My Hands" so lamentably wasn't. That one was drawn mostly from *Thrilling Wonder* and *Starling*; this one is from *Astounding* and *Unknown*, '41-'49.

"Placet Is a Crazy Place" is about the peculiar planet to end all p.p.'s: "Placet is the only known planet that can eclipse itself twice at the same time, run headlong into itself every forty hours, and then chase itself out of sight." It can, too. The problems and solutions are pretty simple-minded, but wonderfully good fun.

In "Etaoin Shrdlu," Brown similarly wraps up the subject of linotypes in science-fantasy, taking one eccentric primary assumption and, with a dead pan, carefully piling on one logical development after another, each more outrageous than the last. "Armageddon" is a very neat little horror tale concerning a water pistol and a Tibetan prayer wheel.

"The Waveries" is Brown's back-to-1900 fantasy, now a classic; nine years ago it made me indignant; re-reading it recently, I loved it. Take your choice. Leaving the moral of the story aside, if you can, it's a beautiful piece of work. Brown uses a man-in-the-street vocabulary like a precision tool—meaning not that he's precise in the technical sense; his technical terms are, as you'd expect, all balled up ("psychopathic" for "psychiatric," "radio waves" used as if it were an opposing term to "TV waves," &c.); but in Brown's hands the language does to you precisely what Brown wants it to, and tells his story with maximum clarity and a minimum of fuss. —Except, that is, for elegant tricks like this one:

He shook his head slowly. "There must be some other explanation, George. The more I think about it now the more I think I'm wrong."

He was right: he was wrong.

"The Hat Trick" is another neat, insinuating little horror story—a model of compression.

"The Angelic Anglemworm" is one of Brown's better puzzle stories, but overlong—the rent must have been due—and tedious in spots.

"The Yehudi Principle," for which I have been calling for years, is one of my two favorite Brown pieces, and my nomination for the best comic science-fantasy story ever. (The other favorite is "The Death of Riley," first published in *Detective Tales* years ago, and now, happily, again available in "Mostly Murder" (Pennant, 25¢).

The book is agreeably pieced out with

Brown's usual urbane introduction, and with a real surprise—nine new vignettes, 300-400 words apiece, all with neat twister endings, some notably bawdy, nearly all funny as hell except one, "Reconciliation," which is deadly serious.

This one belongs on your basic-library shelf.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL'S DEEP SPACE (Fantasy Press, \$3) is a collection of nine stories, most of them only a few years old. Four of them are A's on my scale: "The Witness," "Last Blast," "Homo Saps" and "The Undecided"; all the rest are high B's—"First Person Singular," "The Timid Tiger," "A Little Oil," "Rainbow's End" and "Second Genesis." Two of these latter are Adam-and-Eve stories, a type of which I am mightily tired; but Russell, with his curious blend of untutored impudence and wide-eyed mysticism, does it as well as anybody.

Although he is not above puncturing human pretensions in such wry stories as "Homo Saps," Russell is at his exuberant best, I think, when he is celebrating the endless potentialities of man—as in "The Undecided," and so many others that for years I was persuaded Russell had written. James H. Schmitz's wonderful "The End of the Line."

These are story-teller's stories. Their grammar isn't always perfect, they're full of repetitious mannerisms, and all the characters speak with Russell's voice. It couldn't matter less. According to the copyright page, the American Foundation for the Blind has recorded these stories as a "Talking Book." I'll bet they sound just fine.

OPERATION OUTER SPACE (Gnome, \$3) is pure-quill Murray Leinster—easy-going, shallow, ingenious. Leinster, the old gadgeteer, can take a new idea and pull startlingly logical consequences out of it like nobody else in the business. This is what P. Schuyler Miller aptly calls "invention fiction," and Leinster is its last great prophet.

The invention, in this case, consists of two gimmicks that create between them a condition of space in which E is not a limit—ergo, faster-than-light travel is possible. But what good is it? We-ell, says Leinster, scratching his chin, suppose you put one of the two gimmicks on the nose of a spaceship—

He takes it from there, in a cockeyed odyssey that stretches half across the Milky Way. When the possibilities of the gadget are exhausted, Leinster, with nothing more to say, brings his voyagers home—but by that time he's spun out 70-odd thousand words of good-humored adventure. The book has one other idea, equally ingenious—that the first extra-solar flight may be financed not by governments or philanthropists but by television sponsors... leading to such pathetic scenes as that in which the hero is monitoring a commercial down in the belly

of the spaceship while, just outside, the first manlike extra-terrestrials are being discovered.

The characters, who have not changed since 1930, are simple and clean-cut and have nice Anglo-Saxon names. The love interest is comfortingly tepid. The writing is loose-jointed and unpolished—but the framework of this novel is as sound as a good pegged chair.

TWO OF THE many books I would never have heard of if it weren't for the omnivorous Mr. Anthony Boucher are **THE MAGICIANS**, by J.B. Priestley (Harper, \$3) and **UNDER THE INFLUENCE**, by Geoffrey Kerr (Lippincott, \$3.50). I'd like to put in my vote for both of them, however belatedly. The Priestley novel is an ingenious bit of fluff, sprightly and engaging, with an unexpected core of something entirely serious, totally irrational and deeply mooring. The hero, a sort of latter-day Scrooge, encounters three little mystics (Time Past, Time Present, Time to Come?) who put him through repeated experiences of "time alive"—something so attractive even here ("the great golden morning of the living world") that I half wonder if it wasn't a mistake for Hubbard to peddle Dianetics as therapy rather than as a cult. "Under the Influence," wrapped in that insulting third-rate jacket, is the funniest fantasy novel since Thorne Smith's "The Glorious Pool." It's also a more craftsmanlike job than Smith ever did in his life; and if this story of the bank clerk who's telepathic only when sozzled isn't snapped up by paperbacks, television and the movies, there's no justice in the world.

BRIEFLY NOTED

TOM CORBETT, SPACE CADET, A View-Master Story Packet (three stereo reels, each mounting seven scenes) is View-Master's first excursion into science fiction, and a startlingly effective job. The packet is \$1; the stereoscope to look at them with is \$2, and well worth it—not only for this set, but for the fairy-tale reels, "Jack and the Beanstalk," "Alice In Wonderland," et al.

SHADOWS IN THE SUN, by Chad Oliver (Ballantine, \$2 and 35¢) is the best novel Ballantine has produced in a long time. The theme is an alien masquerade on Earth; the treatment is original and compelling.

STAR SHORT NOVELS, edited by Frederik Pohl (Ballantine, \$2 and 35¢) contains three novellas by Jessamyn West, Lester del Rey and Theodore Sturgeon. The Sturgeon is first-rate; the other two are interesting failures.

I AM LEGEND, by Richard Matheson (Gold Medal, 25¢) might have been a minor masterpiece, except for the year's most futile attempt to convert pure fantasy into science fiction.

[Please Turn To Page 64]



Bonesteel ruled this world, and he claimed that the vast majority of his subjects were happy. Which was true, and for the strangest reason!

GLADSOME PLANET

by Russ Winterbotham

GORDON STONE fixed his deepset eyes on the man from his home planet. "Gad, Bonesteel," he said, "you're twenty years older than when I saw you last."

"Nothing unusual in that," said Humphrey Bonesteel, "considering that it's been twenty years since we've seen each other." Bonesteel looked at his former friend. His hair was still light brown, without gray; his eyes were

clear and he wore no glasses; his body slim, without fat. "I will say, though, that time has been kind to you."

Stone looked at the gray-haired man from earth. He noted the tell-tale signs of approaching middle-age, as well as the tiny pock-like scars in his skin—space burns that resulted from years of interstellar travel.

"You've heard of hell," said Stone. "This is heaven."

He waved his arm, gesturing with its wide sweep the whole horizon. There was something about Gordon Stone that made everything he said seem like a self-evident, axiomatic truth. Bonesteel felt that this place undoubtedly was heaven.

"It's hard to believe that you could have carved such an empire in so short a time," said Humphrey Bonesteel.

Stone shrugged. "If earthmen excel at anything, I suppose it is political science." He laughed. "Well, call it intrigue, if you will. I'll have to admit I pulled a few wires and a few fast ones to get where I am, but it didn't take much. I had the right idea to begin with; once you have the right idea, things sort of take care of themselves."

"Well, you are to be congratulated," said Bonesteel. "I've heard a lot about X-43—"

"We've changed its name," said Stone. "But we've been too busy to notify the star-map makers. We call our sun Akhenaten, and our planet Menes."

"Ah! The Egyptian influence—names of a god and a king! I suppose there's a reason?"

"No. I just liked the names."

"You named them."

"Certainly. I'm the high mogul; why shouldn't I name everything?"

Humphrey Bonesteel looked at his friend. Stone had always been an opportunist, but it was hard to imagine him as a chief. He was too much of an idealist, and just a bit of a crazy one at that. But everyone Bonesteel had seen since his arrival on the planet only a few hours ago had seemed happy and contented. In fact, the idea that this was heaven, had occurred to him almost at once.

"I rule wisely," said Stone, seeming to sense what Bonesteel was thinking.

"I know you must, and I've heard that you have. Most men would have been tempted to substitute tyranny for benign leadership—especially when

they ruled a planet on which they were foreigners."

"We're all people, whether we live in the solar system or the farthest galaxy," said Stone. "I just give everyone what they want. This is heaven, because the natives want this kind of a world."

"Surely it isn't unanimous! It's human nature never to be satisfied; you must have some discontented subjects!"

"Yes," said Stone. "There are a few, but they don't live here. We have another place, not so heavenly, on a continent near the equator. People who don't agree with things live there; we call it Styx."

They were riding down the principal street of New Ontario, the capital city of Menes. The people, small, lithe and fragile-looking thronged the thoroughfare. They waved at Stone, smiling and happy. They seem to thrive on the dream of this Michiavellian earthman, who had carved this empire out of a little, unknown star system some forty years from the sun.

SUDDENLY, Bonesteel was not so sure about Stone. He noted the windows of the car had radiation-resistant glass in the windows. This seemed odd. If people were satisfied with the Terran's leadership, why should he take such precautions? And Bonesteel noted men in armored machines, heavily-armed men, who traveled ahead and behind the chief's vehicle. Bonesteel remembered—Stone had admitted that he did not have unanimous support.

"How'd you happen to come here in the first place?" the visitor asked.

Stone's eyes seemed to glisten with memories. "I came here to trade, but I stayed to conquer." He looked off at the buildings, and his countenance seemed to soften. "Goodness knows, the people here needed something. No initiative, no aim, no industry; just a bunch of lazy bums. And I made something out of them all." He paused, "All but a few cranks."

It wasn't a boast. Humphrey Bonesteel realized that Stone was speaking a belief; and he could also see that Menes was as neat and smooth as any world its size, which was about the size of the earth. Stone had transformed it into something utterly dreamlike in twenty years. It must be because the people here were different. Man doesn't take to changes quickly. Granted though, that the people of Menes might be somewhat different from Terrans, it was hardly believable. Life-forms are adaptive, but adaptations takes time, usually several generations. Bonesteel thought of the length of time England had taken to adapt itself to the Norman conquest.

There must have been resistance; there must have been die-hards. How had Gordon Stone overcome these?

The car swung into a tunnel and pulled up beneath an underground archway, the entrance to some building of state. A group of uniformed men—the gendarmerie of the planet, sprang to attention at the entrance as Stone and Bonesteel left the car. As they passed through the doorway, two of the gendarmes fell in behind them and marched with drawn radiation pistols into the building.

"Bodyguard?" asked Bonesteel.

Stone nodded. "One can never be too careful," he said. "This is Justice Day, and the relatives of criminals are usually upset; they might try drastic measures to prevent their loved ones from being sent to Styx."

They passed into a long corridor, lined with a white stone that looked like marble, and brilliantly lit by fluorescent globes which hung from the ceiling. Beside each doorway they passed, stood a uniformed gendarme. And behind these guards Humphrey saw faces. For the first time, in these faces, Humphrey saw unhappiness.

Everywhere else he had been since he stepped out of his spaceship, Bonesteel had noticed smiles and happiness; but here was anxiety, a few tear-

strained faces—a different expression, which made him homesick for the earth.

"Those are relatives of criminals," Stone explained without slackening his pace. "They are closeted with the defendants and allowed to give advice. Justice, you see, is often unjust for the innocent, and we must do our best to see that everyone has a chance to present his case."

They stepped into an elevator which automatically whisked them upward. Bonesteel did not notice how far, but he judged they traveled several stories. They stepped forth into another corridor and walked to a door. A gendarme at the door, saluted briskly and opened the door.

Bonesteel followed Stone into a balcony that overlooked a circular chamber. At one side was a dais on which was a desk. An official dressed in judicial robes—even to a powdered wig—sat behind the desk, looking down on a group of men and women, fettered by chains. Behind this group were others, the most unhappy of all people in that room.

"Those in chains are defendants," said Stone. "The others are relatives of the defendants—or close friends and the like—who might suffer if the defendant is found guilty."

HUMPHREY'S eyes fell on a single figure in the group. A slender, fragile girl. She seemed to sense his gaze and turned, looking up at the earthman. She had a pretty face.

"What did that girl do?" Humphrey Bonesteel asked Stone.

Stone followed Humphrey's stare. "Pretty thing, isn't she?" he said.

"Could she be a criminal?"

Stone shrugged. "She hasn't been tried yet," he said. "You know a man is never guilty till he's been found guilty by the court. But she's here; at least she's suspected of crime."

"But what crime?"

"There is only one crime on Mentis," said Stone.



Humphrey's eyes scanned the others. There were three old men, two middle-aged men, a boy, two older women besides the girl. Nine altogether. Not many, but they were sad.

"What is the crime?" he asked.

"Crime is hard to define," said Stone. "Sometimes the wrong word in the wrong place; sometimes an act that cannot be recalled. I think the best definition for crime on this planet is that it is an attempt to rectify an admitted mistake."

The truth dawned on Bonesteel. "That sounds political," he said. "These are political prisoners?"

"Only in a sense," said Stone. "There is only one crime on Menes—that is the crime of admitting there is anything wrong with conditions as they are. Politics is a way of life. A bad life is not harmful, unless it is *recognized* as a bad life. As long as it is thought to be good, why should any life be bad or criminal? Even on earth, you can do a thing and get away with it if it is done at the right time."

The judge cleared his throat and

rapped his gavel. "State versus Tlata Deusen," he said.

One of the old men stepped forward. "I am a farmer, judge," said the man. "This year I did not fertilize my soil; as a result my crop failed. As an individual I suffered."

"Did you publicly admit your error?" asked the judge.

"I most certainly did. It was wrong not to fertilize the soil; had I done so I would have enough money to bet on the horse races at the county fair!"

"For this mistake, you are sentenced to five years in the Styx," said the judge.

Sobs and cries came from the poor man's relatives, but they were quickly seized by the gendarmes and led away with the convicted man. Their screams: "A miscarriage of justice!" echoed through the hall.

"Next case," said the judge. "State versus Unbla Corgis."

The judge took the complaint, read it silently and then glanced toward the prisoner, who had stepped forward rattling his chains. He was the second old man.

"I am a farmer, judge," said the man. "This year I fertilized my soil. As a result, I had a bumper crop."

"Did you publicly state that you made a mistake?"

"I did, your honor, and the reason is as obvious as the wig on your head. I brought down grain prices by marketing my bumper crop. Other farmers were ruined."

"You will go to Styx for five years," said the Judge.

Again sobs and cries came from the convict's relatives, but they were led away by the gendarmes.

"State versus Lana Duxle," said the judge.

The girl stepped forward.

"Don't let her be sent to Styx," whispered Bonesteel. "Surely you can issue a pardon for her."

"I will not interfere," said Stone,

The girl already was speaking. "I killed my grandmother," said the girl.

Bonesteel was horrified. She did not look like a murderess.

"Did you publicly state that it was wrong?"

"I did not, sir," said the girl. "My grandmother was old. She suffered from cancer, from paralysis, from hardening of the arteries. She would have died soon, anyhow; I could not stand her suffering."

"I find you not guilty," said the judge.

"Good heavens," said Bonesteel. "What kind of a court is this? You sentence people to exile for fertilizing their crops, and for not fertilizing their crops, and find an admitted murderess not guilty!"

Stone smiled. "Justice is a peculiar thing," he said. "On earth you try to make rules about justice.

"To break a law is a mistake; every-

one admits it is wrong. So there are two ways of life on Earth—the right way and the wrong way. Here on Menes we do not admit there is wrong—there may be many right ways. If sin were not recognized, there would be no sin."

"Is that why everyone is happy?"

"Oh no," said Stone; "they are happy because they don't believe they can make a mistake."

They left the court room. The two bodyguards were waiting and they followed Stone and his guest to the elevator.

"Your method of justice is a little odd," said Bonesteel, "but I notice you don't trust your subjects too far; you always have bodyguards."

"Someone might get the idea that it would not be wrong to assassinate me," said Stone. For a moment the ruler of the joyful planet looked worried.



READIN' and WRITHIN'

(continued
from page 59)

NORTHWEST OF EARTH, by C. L. Moore (Gnome, \$3) is the second volume of Mrs. Kuttner's early stories—florid and sensuously coltish.

YEAR OF CONSENT, by Kendell Foster Crossen (Dell, 25¢) is a totally disappointing pastiche of "1984" and "Gravy Planet."

CONAN THE BARBARIAN (Gnome, \$3) is the fifth in this series.

STORIES FOR TOMORROW, edited by William Sloane (Funk & Wagnalls, \$3.95) is a big collection of familiar material—a good introduction to science fiction, but no help to the aficionado.

THE TREASURY OF SCIENCE FICTION CLASSICS, edited by Harold W. Kuebler (Hanover, \$2.95) is just about what it purports to be—science fiction (and whimsical fantasy) by respectable writers, most of them respectably dead. Nearly all of these stories are readily available elsewhere, but people who want them in one place will find this book a bargain.

PLANETS FOR SALE, by E. Mayne Hull (Fell, \$2.75) is a "novel" made of the old, painfully crude Artur Blord stories from *Astounding*.

CHILDREN OF THE LENS, by Edward E. Smith, Ph. D. (Fantasy Press, \$3) finishes off the massive Lensman series.

THE FORGOTTEN PLANET, by Mur-

ray Leinster (Gnome, \$2.50) is an unusually successful combination of two ancient novelties, "The Mad Planet" and "Red Dust," with a new ending smoothly fitted on. Readers who remember these with affection will be pleased to find them as good as ever.

THE YEAR AFTER TOMORROW, edited by Lester del Rey, Cecile Matschat and Carl Carmer (Winston, \$3) is a big book edited with the general characteristics we have come to expect from Winston. Three of the nine stories are by *The American Boy's* Carl H. Claudy and were first published circa 1930. In their day, these were great stuff, but they've held up poorly; three of them are too many, or too few. (An all-Claudy collection, creaky as the stories are, would be a historically valuable book.) Three more stories are by Peter van Dresser, from the same magazine, same period. While they're better and more consistently written than Claudy's, these are pure translations—sea-going ships to space-ships—and hardly worth saving. That leaves three. Two of them are by editor del Rey—"The Luck of Ignatz" and "Kindness" from *Astounding*. That leaves one: Robert Moore William's 1940 *Astounding* melodrama, "The Red Death of Mars."





INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

A Department For The Science Fictionist

by Robert A. Madle

SCIENCE FICTION SPOTLIGHT

WITH THE Science Fiction Clubs: The oldest continuously existing science fiction club in the world, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Seventy attendees heard Forrest J. Ackerman present an unexpurgated history of the club, complete with photos and magic lantern slides. All readers residing in the vicinity of LA are invited to attend one of the LASFS meetings. Write to Ackerman, at 915 South Sherbourne Drive, for details.

Ian Macauley, President of the Atlanta Science Fiction Organization, informs us that the club is always looking for new members. This active group recently published in book form Sam Moskowitz's history of science fiction fandom, "The Immortal Storm," which is, unquestionably, one of the most noteworthy of all fan accomplishments. Information concerning the club and/or "The Immortal Storm" will be forthcoming if you write to Macauley, 57 East Park Lane, Atlanta 5, Georgia.

Dr. Scott C. Osborn, Box 69, State College, Mississippi, has advised us of the existence of the Mississippi State Science Fiction Club. Meetings are held on the campus of the University and any further information is available from Dr. Osborn. The group is interested in receiving sample copies of leading fanzines for inclusion in the club library. This youthful organization already has thirty members, and the club will subscribe to all fanzines they consider worthwhile.

Readers in the Charlotte, North Carolina area are cordially invited to attend a meeting of the Carolina Science Fiction Society. The CSFS celebrated its first anniversary in January and, in the space of one year,

has made considerable progress. Meetings are held bi-weekly and the group participates more as an informal literary discussion group rather than a formal "Roberts' Rules of Order" organization. John Borchert, Secretary, will send anyone interested information concerning forthcoming meetings. His address is 3721 Eastway Drive, Charlotte, N. C.

John Mussells, 4839 Shelby Avenue, Jacksonville 10, Florida, writes that he is organizing the Jacksonville Science Fiction Society and is eager to hear from anyone within traveling distance of Jax who would care to be a member.

As can be readily ascertained from the above, most of the recent activity (organization-wise) has been in the South. The South is almost virgin territory as far as fandom is concerned, and at the rate it is progressing could very well become the "New Mecca of Fandom." The latest news from down yonder is that representatives of the Atlanta, Carolina, and Mississippi State groups met in Atlanta and made plans for the 1st Southeastern Science Fiction Conference, to be held at the Hotel Dinkler Plaza, Atlanta, Georgia, April 2 and 3. At this writing program planning is in a formative stage, but already Wilson "Bob" Tucker has agreed to be MC at the banquet. And many fans from outside the South (from such cities as Cleveland, Cincinnati, and New York) have stated their intentions of attending. The only cost to each attendee will be a \$1 registration fee which should be mailed to Ian Macauley, 57 East Park Lane, Atlanta 5, Georgia. Chairman Macauley will, in turn, see that you receive all pre-conference bulletins and information.

Science fiction organizations are invited to send information concerning their activities and meetings as we intend, from time to time, to devote some space to the active

meeting groups which do so much to propagate science fiction. Address all communications to the writer, address at the end of this department.

NEWS AND VIEWS: Over a year ago *Esquire* purchased Charles Beaumont's "too hot to handle" short story, "The Crooked Man," and paid him ten cents a word for it. Now they have relinquished it back to the author, who immediately peddled it to *Playboy*. ... *Authentic Science Fiction* (England's monthly) will reprint F. J. Ackerman's short-short, "The Mute Question." This will be its sixth reprinting. Incidentally, Ackerman, assisted by Ray Bradbury, A. E. van Vogt, Chad Oliver, Kris Neville (and 120 others!) recently celebrated his 38th birthday by throwing an s-f party deluxe in his new office-den which houses his entire collection of science fiction. Someday we hope to be able to see Forrie's collection, which is undoubtedly the most comprehensive extant.

"Slan," now seeing reprinting in Sweden's *Hapnal*, will be serialized in the German s-f prozine, *Utopia*, and the projected Japanese s-f publication will publish "Donovan's Brain." ... Alfred Knopf has asked Chad Oliver to do an original for book publication.

A few of the many bargain buys on the stands now are: "Assignment in Eternity," by Robert A. Heinlein (Signet, 25¢); "Against the Fall of Night," by Arthur C. Clarke (Permabooks, 25¢); Kendall Foster Crossen's original 1984ish novel, "Year of Consent" (Dell, 25¢); Fritz Leiber's "The Green Millennium" (Lion Books, 35¢); Philip Van Doren Stern's "Great Tales of Fantasy and Imagination" (originally published as "The Moonlight Traveler"—Pocket Books, 35¢); selections from one of the pioneer anthologies, "Adventures in Time and Space" (Pennant, 25¢); Ace Double Novels offering of "Atta" by Bellamy and "The Brain Stealers" by Leinster; and a Signet reprint of J. N. Leonard's factual, "Flight Into Space." For those of you who can't afford too many of the hardcovers (and who, pray, can?) there is plenty in the softcover field.

This year's World Science Fiction Convention (the 13th) will be held in Cleveland, Ohio, over the Labor Day weekend. This will be the year's gala event—the one at which you will be able to meet your favorite editors and authors. Practically every big name in the science fiction field will be present and, if you haven't attended one of these annual affairs, it is suggested that you make plans to be at this one! As this is being written, plans are just beginning to take solid form so far as the program is concerned, and more definite information will appear in this department next issue. In the meanwhile, why not get your name on the membership list so that you will receive all mailings and publications concerning the convention? Memberships are \$2, and a membership card is a necessity for

entrance to the convention hall. Get your fee in early because the boys and gals putting on this show urgently need funds with which to make preliminary arrangements. P.O. Box 508, Edgewater Branch, Cleveland, Ohio, is the official mailing address, and Ben Jason is Treasurer.

The Scientifilms: In all probability Cornel Wilde will star in George Orwell's "1984." It will be produced this year in Europe by N. Peter Rathvon. ... And the next Jules Verne opus to be filmed will be "Around the World in Eighty Days." Furthermore, the new Todd-American optical process will be utilized. ... Richard Carlson, who is even more famous for his science fiction roles than for his portrayal of "Comrade Herb" on TV's "I Led Three Lives," will star in a screen adaptation of Judy May's "Dune Roller." It would be difficult to enumerate, offhand, all of the s-f thrillers Carlson has starred in during the past few years. ... Going the rounds now is Columbia's "The Monster from the Ocean's Bottom." For some inexplicable (?) reason there isn't a theater in this area interested in showing it. Wonder why...

THE FAN PRESS

DURING THE past quarter the fan publishers have been just as active as usual. Some of fandom's publications have been bad, some good, and some outstanding these past three months. But, and perhaps we're inadvertently permitting our enthusiasm to subdue our alleged analytical mind, most we have received have fallen into the good and outstanding categories.

Consider, for instance, issue #22 of *Grue* (25¢ from Dean A. Grennell, 402 Maple Avenue, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin). Grennell's contribution to the fan field is invariably top-calibre stuff, but this time even the Dean has outdone himself! This issue is composed of 52 large, faultlessly mimeographed pages, and how a man with a wife and five children is capable of such a valiant effort is beyond our comprehension.

Evelyn Gold (*Galaxy's* "Girl Editor") gives her impressions of the 1954 Science Fiction Convention, held in San Francisco last Labor Day. A. Vincent Clarke is represented with a little bit of whimsy called "The Ultimate Fanzine" and Gregg Calkins, with the same "tongue-in-cheek" manner, writes of "Quest": prominent s-f personalities search for a hotel which has never heard of science fiction so that the next convention can be held therein. There are twenty pages of letters (at least ten too many—which statement can be construed as acid criticism as far as *Grue* is concerned) and ten pages of Grennell himself, which is our favorite ten pages. For those of you who are looking for something different in fanzines, *Grue*, cleverly written and impeccably reproduced, is highly recommended.

After too long an interval, the latest issue of *Fantastic Worlds* found its way into

our mailbox. (This one, which can be termed a member of the "little magazine" category, costs 30¢ per quarterly issue, and is obtainable from Sam Sackett, 411 West 6th Street, Hays, Kansas.) FW is photo-offset, and this time consists of 40 evenly balanced pages of fiction, articles, and departments. Raymond T. Shafer, Jr., in his short story, "The Winners," tells of the not-too-far future when urbanization (due to over-technological-specialization and over-population) has become so critical that numerous people reside in a small cubby hole in a dwelling. However, Sociology now teaches that the trend is away from urbanization. An interesting concept, nevertheless.

The longest item in the issue is editor Sackett's analysis of the fantasy of the 18th century writer, Henry Fielding. Sackett (who is an English teacher and a writer himself—he wrote "Hail to the Chief" in the June, 1954 *Future*) publishes here what is quite possibly one of the research papers he wrote as a student: just a little too academic is our only criticism. In the book review section editor Sackett displays himself to be a critic of the vitriolic class. His reviews are quite discerning. FW is semi-professional and is recommended to those who are interested in the serious aspects of science fiction.

Another in this semi-professional group is *Inside* (25¢ from Ron Smith, 1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale, California). With this issue is incorporated *Science Fiction Advertiser*, which has always been a favorite with us. This magazine, like *Fantastic Worlds*, is a serious combination of fiction, articles, and departments. Alan Hunter writes a brief, but fairly comprehensive, survey of the contemporary science fiction scene in England. Doyle Lewis tearfully deprecates the science fiction movie by comparing it with "The Egyptian." Sorry, Doyle: you're somewhat off base. Admittedly, "The Egyptian" was a good picture, but certainly not a great one. And "The Day the Earth Stood Still" and "War of the Worlds" (which you employed as examples to prove your premise) were good science fiction movies in our book.

Chad Oliver asks, "What Is Science Fiction?" His reply ("...it is the inevitable response in literature to the scientific and technological revolutions of our time") has been stated before and, as before, will result in a great deal of agreement and disagreement. Poul Anderson appears this issue, and there are three short stories, Robert Gilbert's story of pre-history, "The Old Man," being the best of these. Suggestion to Editor Smith: change the name of *Inside* (which is quite inappropriate for a science fiction magazine) to the *Science Fiction Advertiser* and, more or less, adopt SFA's policies.

One of the best dime's worth in fandom today is *Peon* (Charles Lee Riddle, 108 Dunham Street, Norwich, Connecticut).

The beautifully mimeographed format of *Peon* is coupled with some of the best fan (and professional) writing found in the amateur press. In issue #33 (this mag is a real oldtimer) Harry Harrison (editor of *Science Fiction Adventures*) tells of "The Death of Science Fiction." Why, asks Harrison, do not the stories of today thrill and inspire as did the tales of yesteryear? What essential ingredient is missing? The answer is, "The sense of wonder," and Sam Moskowitz could write a book on this subject.

Isaac Asimov, somewhat bitterly, asks, "Why Can't the Author Meet His Critics?" As Asimov indicates, it is not apropos for a writer to defend his creation from the vitriolic attacks of critics, be they good critics, or just plain windbags. Throw convention to the winds, sez we! In a recent issue of *Fantasy Times* Sam Moskowitz, apparently livid with rage, struck back at a critic who had lambasted his anthology, "The Editors' Choice of Science Fiction." And A. Hyatt Verrill, in a recent Astounding, took P. Schuyler Miller to task for the latter's statements concerning the former's book. If Moskowitz and Verrill can do it, so can Asimov, or L. Sprague de Camp, or "Doc" Smith.

Peon is loaded with other interesting tidbits, such as Joe L. Hensley's short story, and book reviews by Dave Mason, fanzine reviews by Ian Macauley, and fine columns by Dick Clarkson, Terry Carr, Jim Harmon, and T. E. Watkins. If you have never seen a fanzine, *Peon* would be a good introduction to the field.

Capsule Reviews:

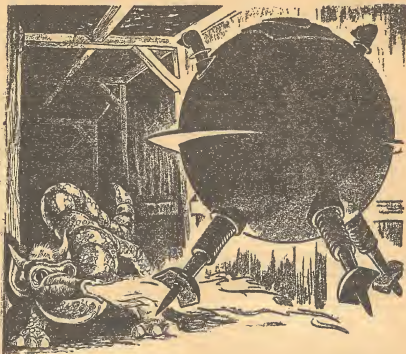
Coup (25¢ from Dave Mason, 14 Jones Street, New York City). This is a loud, hard-hitting attack from the left. Politics, religion, and science fiction are dealt unpunished punches. It is predicted that this first issue will inspire more controversy than anything which has emanated from the fan press in recent years.

Psychotic (20¢ from Richard E. Geis, 2631 N. Mississippi, Portland 12, Oregon). In previous issues we have praised this one highly. And the current issue maintains the pace set by preceding ones. Staff writers Vernon L. McLain, Harlan Ellison, Noah McLeod, and Editor Geis, continue to turn out highly commendable material. Nothing better around the fan field today.

EISFA (only 5¢ from Juanita R. Wellons, 529 Milton Avenue, Anderson, Indiana). This is the publication of the Eastern Indiana S-F Association, but there is enough material of a general nature to warrant our suggestion that you give it a whirl. How they can sell it for a nickel is beyond us. It takes a 3¢ stamp to mail it!

Send all fanzines for review to: Robert A. Madle, 1620 Anderson Street, Charlotte, North Carolina.

After all, Black Roger was an honest man — a properly-licensed space pirate, never even suspected of tax-evasion!



The creature's breath was sheer atomic fire...

THE GUZZLER

by Robert Abernathy

illustrated by LUTON

KRACHMEYER slumped spinelessly over his desk, propped his elbows on it and his head on his hands. "It isn't enough," he groaned, "that Black Roger the space pirate has to pick this asteroid to land on. On top of that, the very same day a guzzler turns up in the shaft!"

Dirk MacGregor looked sympathetically down at Krachmeyer's pink, be-

spectacled despair. To make his sympathy more evident, he too leaned heavily on the mine superintendent's desk, and that overburdened piece of furniture squawked painfully and subsided at one corner.

Krachmeyer jumped as if stabbed. "Don't do that!" he shouted.

Hastily Dirk straightened his six-foot-two frame, which towered impres-

sively in his green and gold Ranger's uniform. He gazed hurtly down at the damaged desk, and shook his head, muttering, "Under this light gravity—Whatever you paid for it, you were swindled."

"Don't change the subject!" flared Krachmeyer.

"Sorry," said Dirk. "About your guzzler—that's news to me; I came here, in re your call to the Park Commission, to serve a sojourn notice on Black Roger. That's as far as my orders go."

"What!" yelled the mine manager. "Do you mean to tell me you're going to let that skulking pirate roost here for two months, without making a move to throw him off?"

"It's the law. A space ship may land for repairs on any body in the public domain, and remain for sixty Earth days if necessary, before towing at the owner's expense becomes obligatory."

Krachmeyer tore what was left of his hair. "Law! Is there no law for honest men?"

Dirk shrugged. "Black Roger is an honest man, too. A properly-licensed space pirate, never even suspected of tax-evasion."

"There's nothing wrong with his ship!"

"If I went over it," sighed Dirk, "something would be adequately out of whack; Black Roger isn't feeble-minded."

Krachmeyer dropped his head in his hands again. After a time he said hollowly, "About that uranium guzzler. I don't suppose the Park Commission can see its way to do anything about that, either?"

"Well," said Dirk with a touch of embarrassment, "I guess it's my duty to remind you that uranium guzzlers are protected by the game-laws. It's a penitentiary offense to harm one—not so much because they're valuable, as because they're harmless ordinarily, but unpredictably dangerous when roused. That's another thing," he

added. "I wouldn't advise you to rouse it."

"Thanks," said Krachmeyer bitterly. "It won't rouse me, either; it'll just eat me out of house and home, or—" he glanced round with distaste at the windowless, lead-sheathed walls, "out of a good paying job, at any rate. Forty tons of ore in the last two days have gone down that beast's gullet!"

"If you like," said Dirk helpfully, "I can report your trouble to the Pest Control Bureau. They have guzzler-catching equipment, but they're about two years behind... On the other hand," he interrupted himself, staring past Krachmeyer, "I think maybe I'll stick around for a while and study your problem myself."

ON THE OTHER hand, a girl had appeared in the doorway behind Krachmeyer. Her lissome form was draped in a sexy negligee, and—Dirk noticed afterwards—she had chestnut hair and wide blue eyes that measured the Ranger's well-proportioned height with frank appreciation.

"Hello," she said warmly.

Krachmeyer swiveled round in his chair; his gaze flickered back and forth between the two young people as if caught in an oscillating magnetic field.

"Hello, Uncle Krach," added the girl negligently.

The addressee gulped. He said mechanically, "This is my niece, Miss Lorraine Farrar—Mr. MacGregor of the Park Service—*Lorraine!* What are you doing here?"

"I heard you were having trouble, Uncle Krach, so I hitched a ride on one of the ore boats."

"Hitched a— Don't you realize those ships are radioactively contaminated? Do you want your offspring to have two heads?"

The girl blushed delicately. "I wish you wouldn't talk about my offspring as if I spawned on alternate Tuesdays," she protested. "Anyway, I had a compartment shielded; and all the robots

were very nice." She looked back to Dirk, and drew her robe closer around her. "I was just getting freshed up after the trip. I didn't know anybody else was here; Uncle Krach was making all the noise."

"Don't call me Uncle Krach!" snorted Krachmeyer, but nobody paid attention to him. He returned to his favorite posture of despair, moaning, "It isn't enough, Black Roger and a guzzler; *she* has to come along."

Dirk said smoothly, "I was just telling your Uncle that I feel it my duty, as representative of the Park Service, to do everything in my power to solve his difficulties."

"They're my difficulties too," said Lorraine Farrar. "I'm the owner."

"Oh." Even Dirk was momentarily speechless.

"I inherited the lease from my father. Father passed on just after he'd acquired it, from a lifetime of overwork supporting a family of eleven—me and ten wolfhounds. I'm carrying on his work. Since the mines here are completely robot-operated, and ordinarily don't require any human attention, I hired Uncle Krach to manage them. But now things have gone wrong, I thought I'd better come out myself."

Dirk gave her a winning smile. "Don't worry, everything will shortly be under control; I'm thinking."

LORRAINE looked at him with a hint of suspicion, but didn't ask what he was thinking about. She perched herself cautiously on a corner of the sagging desk, and said, "I heard something about a guzzler. What's that—more trouble?"

"A uranium guzzler," explained Dirk, "is the System's only known animal with a nucleonic, rather than electronic, body chemistry. It's very rare; they think it's a survival from an earlier stage in planetary evolution, when radioactives were more plentiful than now."

"How could one get on an isolated asteroid?"

"That's hard to say. It may have been hibernating here the last billion years or so—since before the fifth planet broke up to form the Asteroid Belt—until finally it woke up and felt hungry. But a hungry guzzler will eat enormous quantities of uranium to stoke the atomic pile in its stomach. In one of its stomachs, I should say; it has a complex series of them, a lot like the Earthly ruminants', where the ore it eats is refined and the uranium is transmutation to plutonium begun. Its power-pile is analogous to a cow's abomasum."

"A cow's abomination he talks about now," muttered Krachmeyer, shocked to the core.

Lorraine looked seriously worried. "So the mine's easy pickings for this thing with its peculiar appetite. And—working on a shoestring as we still are—we may be bankrupt before it's satisfied."

"For two days now it's eaten all the best ore." Krachmeyer stared morosely at a wall clock. "It'll be crawling into the shaft again any time now—it comes back every six hours."

"It comes and goes, eh?" Dirk brightened. "Why don't you just slam the door in its face?"

It was Lorraine who answered. "We're using stripped-down Mark VI robots, for economy. If we closed the shaft, there'd soon be enough radon accumulated to short-circuit their brains."

"And anyway, the guzzler can blast its way through solid rock," added Dirk. "That wasn't so hot—but wait a minute." He looked piercingly at Krachmeyer. "When did the animal first show up?"

"What does that matter?" shrugged the manager. But he leafed through a log book, most of whose pages were blank save for neurotic-looking doodles, and eventually found an entry. "Thirteen o'clock, July 8—day before yesterday."

"And according to your radiogram," remembered Dirk, "Black Roger landed his ship on the other side of the asteroid at 10:30. Ha!"

"What do you mean, 'Ha!'?"

"I've got a new idea," elaborated Dirk. He straightened his shoulders and his tunic. "First, I think I'd like to watch this guzzler at work; you must have an inspection runabout here..."

THE RUNABOUT was a bathyspheric, lead-armored vehicle with periscopic viewports. It used an anti-gravity motor, which meant that when it was turned on, the stars in their courses faltered—relative to it—the expanding universe ceased to expand, and the unity of the Cosmic All received a severe kick in the pants. It was quite comfortable for the two of them, though—Krachmeyer had stayed home, pleading heartburn.

Dirk piloted the sphere carefully down the wide shaft aimed at the asteroid's heart. As the bottom came nearer, they could see, by the dim blue glow of the great uranium vein that made this insignificant body a simmering mass of wealth, spidery robots floating to and fro, wielding drills, picks, and shovels in a radioactive atmosphere that would have killed an unprotected human in nothing flat.

The girl breathed in Dirk's ear: "It's already come! There—on the slag heap!"

The Ranger stiffened and glued his eyes closer to the periscope. Then he saw the guzzler, hitching its bloated, jointed length across the surface of a great pile of tailings, its magnetic tendrils mooring it to the rocks. It was a big one, a dozen segments long, with a new section budding at the rear end, seeming to indicate that it was thriving on its fat fare. Presently it would grow another head there, pinch in two in the middle, and be double trouble.

"What's it think it's up to now?" frowned Dirk. The guzzler had stopped atop the slag heap, and lowered its noz-

zle-shaped head. Suddenly flaming-hot gases belched from its snout; rock and gravel sprayed in a directions under the light gravity. Fragments rattled on the runabout's hull. Then, just as abruptly, the guzzler ceased to exhale and began to root and gulp contentedly. Beneath the surface layer of cast-off rock had appeared a solid heap of luminously pure uranium ore.

Krachmeyer had forlornly ordered the robots to disguise the high-grade stuff as a worthless dump.

Dirk shook his head sadly. "No good; the beast has a sort of Geiger counter in its head. It'll go straight to the biggest center of radioactivity within miles."

As they watched, the guzzler continued to guzzle, burrowing and munching happily and growing steadily more rotund. The robots, having no instructions with regard to it, went stolidly ahead with their work.

"Maybe," Dirk broke a brooding silence, "you have some idea why Black Roger would choose to land here."

Lorraine's smooth brow creased. "Well—obviously he must have designs on the mine. This lode will be one of the most profitable ever, once we get properly into production. Now you mention it—on Mars a couple of weeks ago I was approached by a lawyer who said he was acting as an agent for somebody he wouldn't name, and offered me a price for the lease—a ridiculously low price. Later I heard that he was a well-known shyster who'd successfully defended Black Roger, not long ago, in a case before the Piracy Board."

"Ha!" said Dirk again.

The guzzler finished its meal and, bulging, maneuvered its unwieldy bulk once more toward the top of the shaft. Dirk floated the runabout slowly upward before it until both ship and monster emerged onto the surface of the asteroid. Then he began to follow it as it ambled away across the rugged, meteor-pocked crust.

IT WAS a patience-trying pursuit. After some minutes Lorraine demanded restlessly, "What are you trying to do? Where's it going?"

"Ask it," advised Dirk enigmatically. "Or maybe Black Roger could tell you."

It took the full-fed guzzler most of two hours, traveling a great-circle route, to complete half a circuit of the little asteroid. But at last, dead ahead of its resolutely pointing snout, something loomed into view—a long, rakish, soot-colored space ship, resting in a little valley. It was Black Roger's vessel, the *Vulture*. If there had been any doubt of that, it would have been removed by the skull-and-crossbones painted flamboyantly on the ship's flank.

Lorraine's small fists clenched. "What a nerve!"

But Dirk smiled exultantly. "The ends are meeting," he observed as he lifted the runabout to where they could see everything that went on around the pirate ship.

The guzzler jogged steadily onward; when it was a hundred yards away, an airlock opened in the *Vulture's* side, and half a dozen members of its crew—lean, hardbitten Mark IX robots—scrambled out. One of them advanced directly to meet the uranium-eater, one metal hand invitingly extended.

It was too far to see what he held, but the guzzler lowered its snout and snuffled enthusiastically at the mechanical man's palm, for all the world like a horse receiving a lump of sugar.

"Radium salts, probably," judged Dirk. "Guzzlers are crazy about them."

The robot backed away to join his fellows where they stood at expectant attention. They, and the watchers above, had not long to wait. An odd shudder ran down the guzzler's segmented length. Another followed, and another; the huge beast lurched in a vast paroxysm, and the eruption came in a shower of radio-active sparks.

The pirate robots got going prompt-

ly; they produced big metal-fabric sacks, and—while the guzzler sat humped dejectedly, too sick to care—filled them with tons of almost-pure uranium. While the guzzler had been traveling between the mine and the space ship, its complicated stomachs had had time to sort and refine the ore it had wolfed.

AS THE laden robots trudged off to the *Vulture's* lock, Dirk swung the runabout back toward the mine. "Quite a system," he admired. "A good strong emetic with the radium bait—and presto! Black Roger has the uranium, and the guzzler has nothing to do but hike back and make more inroads into your production. It's a vicious cycle that keeps coming out in Black Roger's favor; and after a while he can buy the whole works for a song."

The girl's blue eyes shot sparks. "But we know his plot now. Can't you arrest him?"

"For what? Undoubtedly he caught the guzzler somewhere else, tamed it after a fashion, and brought it here. But how are you going to prove that in court? And until it's proved, the guzzler is an indigenous wild animal, and Black Roger is no more responsible for its actions than any other citizen. His legal position is like the South American ambassador's wife—impentetrable, impregnable and insurmountable."

But he whistled gaily as he piloted the runabout homeward. Lorraine stared frustratedly at him. Finally, as the vehicle sank into its concave cradle atop the mine headquarters, and its door opened automatically into the building, her expression changed, softened, and became helplessly, meltingly, irresistibly appealing. She brushed against Dirk in the doorway and her eyelids fluttered as her gaze met his. "Aren't you going to do *something* about that awful pirate?" she murmured.

"Do something?" Dirk grinned.

"Well, I've still got a sixty-day sojourn notice to serve on Black Roger; guess I'll deliver it to him now."

Then he bent and kissed the girl with a suddenness and violence that left her views in the matter wholly an academic question, turned and was gone with long strides toward the chamber where he had left his spacesuit.

As a matter of fact, Dirk did not start at once to serve the papers on Black Rogers. After he returned to his

he dropped heavily to the ground; but, nothing abashed, Dirk advanced and banged deafeningly on the outer lock.

It was opened promptly by a sour-looking robot. Dirk tapped the Ranger's badge on his chest, and the automaton moved grudgingly aside, and even more grudgingly answered Dirk's imperious question by pointing aft.

DIRK COULD have located Black Roger's living-quarters easily, any-



little Ranger's patrol boat, he spent a busy while in its engine-compartment before going up to the control cabin and pointing the ship's nose toward the *Vulture's* roosting place.

Even then he traveled slowly, following the route the guzzler had taken; about halfway along it, he paused to cruise in leisurely circles for ten minutes, dropping numerous small packages from the apparatus ordinarily used for firefighting bombs and miscellaneous missiles...

A couple of minutes after that, he nosed his ship down a short distance from the black pirate vessel. On the way he had glimpsed the guzzler below, billowing methodically back toward the mine, and had waved at it benevolently. He had no fear that it would overlook his presents for it; its special senses would lead it straight to every one.

Dirk thrust his official papers into a pouch, buckled his service whammy-gun around his waist outside his spacesuit, and shoved off in a long asteroid-leap for the *Vulture*. As he came within the artificial gravity field that both moored the ship and made it habitable,

way, by the noise of a loud phonograph playing "Hyperbolic Blues". Dirk pushed a door open without ceremony, and surprised the pirate in the midst of a litter of recording tapes, unwashed glasses and dogeared magazines with terrifying covers.

Black Roger himself was a large man, going soft around the middle, but with an upstanding, jetty mustache which lent him a look of ferocity. He was one of the last of the great space-pirates, whose breed had wrought havoc in the pioneer days of a generation before. Then, Earthly legal codes had proved inadequate to the vastnesses of interplanetary space, and bureau piled on bureau had failed to enforce what laws did apply—until someone had conceived the brilliant idea (so familiar to Queen Elizabeth I and her contemporaries) of setting a pirate to catch a pirate. The more promising freebooters had been licensed and given considerable immunities in return for keeping down the more unruly. Now, a pirate was a spaceship owner who lived by his wits without publicly breaking the law—a feat which Black Roger had found not too hard hitherto,

since his wits were excellent and interplanetary law still was scarcely out of diapers.

Dirk leaned close to the space rover, peered intently at his mustache, then recoiled with a shudder.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" asked Black Roger.

"It really is waxed," Dirk deplored. "Tsk, tsk."

Black Roger's eye lit on the badge. "Oh, a cop; sit down and take a load off your flat feet."

"I'm not a cop; I'm a Park Ranger," corrected Dirk. "I've brought you greetings from the Commission for Parks and Monuments." He produced the document. "*To Black Roger Wiesnpefennig, Pirate First Class's notification of limitation of sojourn on a planetary body within the Commission's jurisdiction, according to Article V, Paragraph 3a of the Act of 2012, as amended—*"

Black Roger studied it a trifle nearsightedly, then grunted, "Oh, that," tore the paper to pieces and threw the pieces on the floor.

Dirk regarded him severely. "Maybe you think I don't know what you're up to here."

"Oh, was that you snooping around a while back? So what, says I. I don't care if you took pictures; you have no case, and you know it."

"Maybe so," conceded Dirk evenly. "But, legalities aside, I think you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Roger. A great big pirate like you, and look who you're picking on. A sweet, innocent, helpless little girl who owns the lease on this asteroid—"

"I've seen the babe." Black Roger leered. "Her and me might work up a deal—with you nowhere around, brother."

Dirk sighed. He hadn't expected much, though, from an appeal to the buccaneer's better nature. "One more thing," he said ominously. "Had you considered that the game you're playing might not be safe—for you?"

Black Roger laughed coarsely.

That put an end to any surviving hesitation on Dirk's part. Coolly he drew the whammy-gun, sighted at the other's amusement-convulsed solarplexus, and pulled the trigger.

"Urk!" gasped Black Roger, and lapsed into a rigid silence.

WITH SOME difficulty, Dirk hoisted the body onto his shoulder and went out. The crew-robots who saw this, had no instructions for this contingency. They would have known what to do had someone tried to murder their master, steal his liquor, or sabotage the ship's engines; but to their penetrating electronic gaze it was clear that the master was alive and in good health, though stiff as a board.

Dirk crammed Black Roger into a spacesuit, and once beyond the ship's gravity propelled him without trouble to the patrol boat.

Lorraine Farrar was gloomily going over the mine's books with her uncle. Krachmeyer was sweating; he looked up with marked relief at Dirk's entrance.

"Come on, folks," invited Dirk airily. "You don't want to miss the big show."

"What show?" Lorraine gave him a suspicious look.

"Satisfaction or your money back," Dirk guaranteed, waving them toward the door.

Puzzled, they allowed him to shepherd them into spacesuits and across a bare stretch of asteroid to the patrol-cruiser. Entering its cabin, they halted in stupefaction at the sight of the rigid body extended on the floor.

"This," Dirk introduced it, "is Black Roger."

Lorraine's face lit; she gazed at Dirk, thawing visibly. "Is he dead?" she asked eagerly.

"No," said Dirk. "Just whammied."

Krachmeyer's reaction was horror. "Have you gone crazy? No? Well, then, I will. When he comes to, he'll not only

prosecute you for false arrest, but he'll probably sue us for abetting!"

"Buck up, Uncle Krach—I mean Mr. Krachmeyer." Dirk slapped him on the back, dislocating some internal organs which the mine manager, rightly or wrongly, valued. "I didn't arrest him, I just brought him along; and I don't think he'll sue."

He lifted the ship several miles into space and sent it on a great arc around the asteroid. Then, with a skillful use of braking jets, he brought it to a stop relative to that body and let it go into free fall—whose rate, under the gravitational circumstances, would take some time to become perceptible. Through the nose window they could see the valley where the *Vulture* lay.

"Watch," Dirk told his questioning audience. "You too, Roger."

Black Roger had recovered enough to move his eyes. They gave Dirk a dirty look or two, but after that spent most of their time following Lorraine, who, even in a spacesuit coverall, was worth the effort. Dirk considered putting blinders on him; but more humane counsels prevailed, and he propped the pirate up so that he, too, could see out the nose window.

A MINUTE later, the section of landscape they were watching vanished in a terrific flare of light and heat. Vapor puffed outward and diffused instantly into the vacuum. Except for the special glass of the rocket ship's window, designed to guard against the dangerous radiations of deep space, the sight of the explosion might have been permanently blinding.

As it was, they blinked at each other through a haze of dark after-images.

Strangely, it was Black Roger who got out the first words; the shock seemed to have restored his power of speech. "You dirty crook!" he characterized Dirk. "Kidnaper! Saboteur! I'll break you for this; you'll rot in jail—"

"Uh-uh," said Dirk. "All I did was

save your life by removing you from the scene of an impending accident."

"Accident, horse manure!" snarled the pirate.

"You can't prove differently," quoted Dirk. "What's sauce for the goose may be a bit of gravy for the gander, too."

Black Roger evidently understood all too well; he subsided unhappily.

"I trust," Dirk admonished him gently, "that this will be a lesson to you; go straight from now on, Roger!"

The pirate looked unenthusiastic, but he managed to move his head enough to bring Lorraine back into his field of view, and a little light returned to his eyes. "Maybe," he suggested, "the love of a good woman would—" Lorraine shook her head firmly, moving instinctively closer to Dirk. "I'd shave off my mustache," offered Black Roger wistfully.

"Nothing doing," Dirk told him, enfolding the girl protectively. Then he frowned. "Don't stare." He grasped Black Roger by the shoulders and turned him with his face to the wall.

Krachmeyer found his voice. "How," he inquired awedly, "did you do it?"

Dirk glanced fondly through the window at the still-glowing crater gouged out of the asteroid. "Simple. I abstracted some plutonium from this ship's fuel-stores, and scattered it in small packages where the guzzler would be sure to make a meal on it. Rich, concentrated food, calculated to give it acute indigestion. For a while, though, the plutonium was strung out through its multiple stomachs, slowly piling up in its abomasum. About the time it got back to the *Vulture*, the accumulation reached critical mass, and the guzzler burped.

"And now," Dirk regretfully slid the whammy-gun from his holster, "Lorraine and I would like to be alone."

He stacked the stiffened Krachmeyer up, face to the wall, beside Black Roger.



Perhaps there was something wrong with me; I could see that I was different somehow — I just couldn't take the idea of human beings constantly being on the retreat...

THE RED AND THE GREEN

by Joe L. Hensley



"We can't communicate with the Gnans;
we've tried for thousands of years."

IT WAS clear as a whistle. The only thing that obscured the night sky were the stars, millions of stars. Red stars and green stars.

It was funny about those stars. Somehow I felt that I should be able to pick out the ones that were still ours; I couldn't of course. The configurations out there looked different in three dimensions than they did in two—as I see them on the board. Besides, the section that I watched was only one small part of the vast board, near astronomically, but perhaps too faint to be seen from my balcony.

The balcony was cool. Out around me I could see the lights on other balconies as other people in the great city

sat watching as I was, or talking, or making love. And over this world and thousands like it there were cities much the same.

My reminder rang and then twisted to open position on my wrist. I knew what it was going to say. "You have an appointment at 2700 with Mr. Thorne."

Mr. Thorne—my move-out instructor. I went back into my bachelor apartment; the sliding door to the balcony closed automatically behind me.

For an hour he talked about emergency agricultural methods on planets where things had to be grown in the ground until tanks were set up and

adjusted. I was bored. For another half hour he asked me questions about previous lectures, and stereos I had been assigned to familiarize myself with outside.

He was an old man—sort of a bouncy type, very enthusiastic.

"I'm going to discontinue this," I said, when the lesson was done.

I could see he was disappointed. "I don't see why, Bill," he said. "You'll be ready for my certificate in a few months. Then if you want to move on to something else..."

"I'm just not interested in what you're teaching me."

He was surprised. "So what?" he said finally. "You're young, Bill—you've never made the move-out. If you don't have something to sell yourself with, you might be left behind." He paused for a moment. "I've made the move three times in 140 years," he said proudly. "I've always been useful. I'll be too old to make it again, but I'd like for my knowledge to go. Oh, there will be others, but you're an apt student."

"Mr. Thorne," I said earnestly, "why don't we fight?"

"Fight!" He was horrified.

"Sure," I said. "We had to fight nature and space when we first moved into all those systems that we've left behind us. And yet, with just one other intelligent race in the Universe, that race has to want the planets that we take. Why don't we fight to hold on to them?"

His head lowered and some of the enthusiasm went out of him. *What's that look I see in your eyes, Mr. Thorne?*

"We're not that kind of people any more, Bill. There are better ways of doing things than fighting. Surely you've learned that?"

"I've been told so," I said; "but that doesn't make me believe it." I watched him closely; his eyes were empty. "Look, Mr. Thorne—five days of the

week I sit for four hours in front of the Starboard watching green lights turn into red ones. I make out little, impersonal reports that no one reads, and send them in every time one of those lights changes. There are over a thousand other people working at my board and they all do the same stupid thing—instead of making plans to keep what we have. And every time one of those green lights changes to red that means they have another of our planets."

I looked at his face. This was his order of things. "All we do is retreat—any planet they attempt to take or get near to. Why don't we fight—make a stand? Someday we'll run out of places to retreat to."

Mr. Thorne shrugged. "This isn't my problem; all I do is teach agriculture. The council makes those decisions."

"All right, Mr. Thorne." It always ended this way.

"Then shall we set the next lesson for the same time, day after tomorrow?" he asked, rising.

I nodded. I was too tired to argue. What good would it do, anyway?

After he left I went back out on my balcony and watched the stars for awhile. Red and green stars.

That night I dreamed. I dreamed of all the little things that had proclaimed me different from the rest. The child I had struck when I was young because he had wanted something that was mine. The teachers who had tried to impress the philosophy of retreat on me, the philosophy that our worlds were built on now. And through the dream raced great red creatures with horned heads and metal armor. I smashed them down with a green gun that shot fire into them and I laughed as they fell. And I remembered the tales they had told us in child-training of how each new world claimed the lives of the weak and so one must be strong. But we are not strong.

Red stars and green.

MY REMINDER woke me at 0800 by whistling loudly a popular song I especially dislike. It is set to my likes-and-dislikes charts like everything else in this apartment. In the bathroom tiny, needle sprays of cold water brought me to full awareness and then the water warmed and cleansed. My dresser gauged my mood and sprayed on a bright gown, hoping to change it. I suppose it helped. I just couldn't be very discouraged when I was outside. The sun was warm and some tiny leaves the color of my gown had begun to roly-coaster down onto the plastic of the walking level I took to work. Some people prefer to ride the mover-levels; I prefer to walk.

The buildings were aseptic and sparkling in the sun. The Starboard building was the same as the rest and yet a little different, so that a view of the buildings would not seem monotonous. They did everything that way. It would take them a few years to get things set up after they first moved in, but they set them up right. There wasn't any law against being bored, but it was hard to stay that way.

Take working, for example. A machine could have easily handled changes on the Starboard much better than men, but men did it. Everyone was required to work at least four hours out of the twenty-nine hour day period. Mr. Thorne had told me once that when we first came to this world, forty odd years ago, that people worked *half* of each day period and were happy doing it. I don't suppose you could get bored if you worked that much—you'd be too tired. Now there were parks and shows and dances to occupy off-duty hours.

Betty was on the Starboard check-in desk. "Hi, Bill," she said.

It makes me feel good to see her. I suppose she's no prettier than most, but there is something about the way she uses herself—in moving, in her

eyes, the set of her head—that intrigues me. We're going to get together some day. She knows it and so do I, but we just haven't done anything about it yet.

"Hi, Betty," I said. I touched hands with her, making it last a little longer than was friendly. Why not now?

She took her hand away and marked something on a thin strip of bright plastic. Then she dropped it in a slot in the desk. Again, someone doing something unnecessary—something that a machine could do better.

"You're looking bright this morning." She looked at my robe. "I don't believe I've ever seen that exact shade of orange before."

"Just so long as it's not red or green," I said. "Would you like to have drinks when we get off?"

She hesitated for just a moment—just enough to make it right. "Sure."

I touched her hand again and then went on.

I WAS FEELING the drinks a little. "It's like this," I said. "I get a bad feeling whenever the red lights flash on."

"Maybe you shouldn't be working on a Starboard," Betty suggested. "I mean, if it makes you feel bad, maybe you should be doing something else, Bill. There are lots of other jobs."

She paused for a moment and looked up at me. "I can't agree with you. If we fought, then someone might be hurt. Maybe someone I knew and was fond of—or at least someone that I might be fond of if I *did* know them. I can't see anything wrong in retreating."

"But what happens to those we leave behind?"

Her voice was matter-of-fact. "They have a choice haven't they? Our whole civilization and training is based on moving out, and everyone knows it. There's room on the ships for all who want to leave; plenty of warning and weeks to choose. All you have to know

to transfer is something that's needed and it's easy to learn. Besides the Gnans aren't vicious anymore—that's what the council says now. They're changing just as we knew they would."

"Then it doesn't seem wrong to you to build up a planet and then leave it for them? Never to have a real home?"

"No. I guess I've never really thought about this place as home. Don't you see, Bill, that home for us is out there? We've never found any limit yet—any edge of the stars. And one planet is pretty much the same as another. If they take one away—why there are a thousand more to replace it. All we need is a sun near enough for heat, and in a pinch we can do without that; we can change anything else.

"If one reasoning being does something irrational to another, the other should not return the irrational, but the rational. We can't communicate with the Gnans—we've tried for thousands of years. But we can indicate things to them by our conduct. Someday they will understand—someday they will cease to move in on our planets, because they will realize that foolishness of taking over the planets of the only other intelligent race in the universe when there are billions of unoccupied planets."

I felt a little touch of admiration for her. It was the same type of reasoning that I had heard all of my life; it had seemed all right until I saw the green lights turning red. She put the idea well, but it appeared to me that there was a fallacy in it, which I could not pin down. But why should I be able to, when for thousands of years people had considered moving out and the Gnans as a part of our races' life?

She didn't say anything more and I decided to give up trying to convert her; the idea was too alien to all her beliefs and training. Instead we watched a fountain of foamy colors which was playing soft music in the

middle of the room. I dialed us more drinks and we watched the blue sun set. My mind left the red and green and, after awhile, I held Betty's hand.

We left the place and went for a walk in a dark park hidden between the canyons of buildings. We watched the lights flash on and later off in the city. Even if we couldn't agree on Gnan strategy—there were some things we could agree on...

IT GOT better for a few days—and then it got worse. Betty and I made arrangements to give up our bachelor apartments and take one of the larger ones together to see if we were compatible. We went down to the registry to do it and everyone was kind and jovial there. I suppose Betty drove the red and green out of my head for a few days.

I did my work mechanically, which was the way it was supposed to be done; but I was restless. One morning my dresser sprayed me with a robe that looked almost red. I tore it off and made the dresser re-do me.

That was the day it happened. I checked in and Betty and I talked for a moment about the apartment we were to move into. Then I went on to my place at the board. But there was nobody there—no one to relieve; and most of the seats nearby were empty.

I heard something from far away around the curve of the board. And suddenly I knew what had happened. I ran.

They were standing around one section of the board—these people who looked like me, but were not. Some of the women were crying nostalgically—like you do when Fall turns to Winter or you begin to grow old. But no one seemed angry—just passive and sad.

I looked up at the board. There was one green star up there bigger than the rest. That signified us—this planet; and all in front were red.

They must have moved out an entire system ahead of the Gnans, right up to us. Always before there had been a whole flank of green stars in front of us and a thin wavery line of red at the top.

For a long moment I stood there, my head hot and dizzy. The board blurred malevolently in front of me. I lifted a nearby chair and smashed it against the board—once, twice. And then someone did scream. The red lights and green lights winked out and I sat the chair down. They stood there watching me and I could see the horror on their faces.

"Now we fight," I whispered. "Now we've got to fight. No more red and green—all red now." I could feel the room whirling and whirling around me. I could see disgust in some eyes, fear in others.

Two of them jumped me from behind. I heard one say: "Hold him! Hold him!" and something about crazy. Then my red eye and my green eye quit seeing.

THEY LET me be discharged from the hospital the day before move-out—to see them take off. I had to make all kinds of promises to the councilman. I think he knows that I will never say anything—for even if I thought he was lying to me, I could not take the chance that he was not.

There were quite a few others who stayed besides Betty and me.

There was old Mr. Thorne. I wonder if he knows. There were some families with tiny children who said they had moved before and didn't want to face the rigors of a new world which might kill the children. At least that was the excuse they gave. But most of the ones who stayed probably did so for the same reason I did—because the guts of them were cut away—because they knew. I wonder how many times the councilman has had to come and make the little speech he made to me?

It was an impressive sight. A whole

forest of ships. Great beasts with their heads pointed starwards. People and equipment—millions of people—and of course the Starboard went too. A few hundred like myself left behind.

It was not the way I had expected it. The anti-gravs made no noise; the ships rose together, grew smaller, and were gone. Beside me Betty touched my hand and cried a little. I had not been able to persuade her to leave; I had not really tried—it seemed so pointless. After awhile, when there was nothing left to see, we went back into the city.

I will not stay here. In a few days I'm going to take Betty and head somewhere out in the hills far away. I'll put into practice what Mr. Thorne taught me. That way Betty may never find out; in a few generations the Gnans will be bogeymen to the young children.

But the others? The ones who have resigned themselves? I wonder how they will feel waiting for the invasion that never comes? For there are no Gnans—there isn't anyone but us



in this universe. No other intelligent life.

Life is an accident, and a rare one, and intelligence is the millionth part of the accident. Maybe the odds are even higher. Only once did that accident on accident happen to survive.

Twenty-thousand years of being nomads—even longer. For twenty-thousand years ago man gave up the hunt—the challenge. The councilman showed me the old books. Man had hunted his own galaxy and further and found nothing. Man retreated in on himself and the worlds went sterile and childless. Without new worlds to conquer, man is a nothing; we became weak where once we had been virile. We fell back into decadence and men began to squabble among themselves within their own worlds. Our dreams were destroyed. Left to ourselves we would have smashed back into the soil we came from. The council saw the gravity of the situation.

And so the Gnans were invented and a few planets on the fringe of our worlds were destroyed. The new philosophy was impressed on a race gone weak and tired, and man retreats following a philosophy that encompasses the situation. A philosophy of giving way rationally until the new

race becomes rational, too. And so, in our retreat, we've colonized a thousand million worlds back there along the trail—worlds that would never have seen man. On some he will die out—on others he will change.

Maybe those who move out will find someone out there.

"Don't you see," the old councilman said. "We can't let them know there are no Gnans, for they would squat right here and die in a few generations. The machines would do all the work once they knew that there was nothing to work for—or against. You know them—though you are different from them. And it would be like it was twenty-thousand years ago."

"But what good does the running do? You accomplish nothing."

The old man smiled. "You stay here. You have children. In a few million years—we'll be back through, if we can make the deception last that long."

Last night Betty and I sat watching the bright, white stars. I know she is feeling sorry for herself. I wonder if I should tell her that it is better to have stayed behind. I wonder if I dare. For even if she believed me—she is more like them than like me.

No. I will just hold her hand.



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LOUIS H. SILBERKLEIT
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A Department of Letters and Comment

As I Was Saying...

THERE ARE at least two ways of finding out whether the vocal readers care about a department; one is to put the question plainly, ask for votes, and add up the responses; another is quietly to drop the department in question and see if anyone notices. You'll remember that I tried the first system in respect to the contest on best-liked letters, with originals for awards. Then, in our November issue, I left out the voting coupon and "The Reckoning."

Well, a new author took top honors for our November fiction. D. L. Jourdan's "Change of Color" copped nearly all the first-place selections. Oldtimer Wallace West will have to be content with a strong second place for "Moon Dance," while Jim Harmon was breathing down his neck. Jim's "Voting Machine" was a good distance ahead of Reynolds' "Desperate Remedy." And, although he finished last, Mack Reynolds need not lament, for the "dislike" votes were few, and were scattered evenly among all the tales.

Will Loring Ware please send us a postcard, so we can send him an original? While there were only three letters in the November issue, enough readers cooperated in selecting the positions thereof so that we could make a one, two, three decision, and Ware gets first; with this issue, I'll do my damndest to see that there are no less than a half-dozen entries each time. Whether there are more than six depends upon you.

Production schedules louse up a lot of editorial plans, and I see now that it's just impossible to adhere to a practice that had worked out rather well for a time—that is, of not running letters which referred to two issues back—a matter of six months in a quarterly publication. But seeing how soon after the February issue went on sale that copy for this issue has to be at our industrious printers' desks, it would be expecting much too much. Our heartfelt thanks to faithful readers who do manage to get letters in to us within that period, but it's not fair to act as if only such prompt replies counted.

ANNUAL APPRAISAL

Dear Mr. Lowndes,

Comes another November issue of SFQ which cues me to make my annual appraisal of the mag. You surely must remember

me—none other than the WFL who stormed blue blazes about your last Sept.-Nov. and the Sept.-Nov. before that. I'm the guy that falls into your apt classification of "fiend" and, as a lot of people think, falls into my own established category of 'babbling dead-

head'. Anyway, before I ship the issue off to English fen for their scrutiny, I'm going to give it a little of my own...

It is very interesting to note that SFQ has improved substantially in both mature fiction and artwork since Nov. a year. Freas and Orban are spilling their beautiful lines all over your pages, and in general, contributing a helluva lot of decent illustrating. Try as I may, I am unable to find one example of exceptionally poor artwork—outside of those standard chapter cuts—no matter how vigorously I scour your pages. As a matter of fact, Freas seems to be truly dragging the publication out of the colorless world of indistinction to some greater, and as yet, unforeseeable heights. I am very much surprised to find that a great portion of this issue's depictions are far better than comparable illos in present-day pocket-sized mags. I especially liked Freas' alchemical conglomeration for the de Camp article. You would do well to maintain this artist at all costs.

I always did believe that Emsh was a vastly overated contributor—and purely on the basis of this issue, the pics seem to bear it out. Comparison with Freas, and even Orban, leaves the quality of the Emsh work far behind. I admit that when Emsh sits down and devotes a great deal of time and effort to a particular job, he produces an admirable pic, as most any issue of *Galaxy* will prove. However, the 'slap-dash' requirements of the pulp mags just don't seem to be in his line. But then, the standards of the pulps aren't so high either... He doesn't detract from the mag, but I'd prefer another Freas in his place.

The November fiction was all mediocre to good—nothing really outstanding. Nevertheless, this still marks a decided improvement in the course of a mere 4 issues. Of all the literary content, de Camp's discourse on magic ranks as the most interesting, informative, and generally most outstanding entry. For once, I don't have to read about that terrible Atlantis and Lost continent business, which frankly, bores me no end. Matter of fact, Lyon's quite an engrossing researcher when he's not entangled in that and similar stodgy themes. Let's have more of him—he adds dignity, of a sort, to your pub...

Since I haven't seen any intermediate issues between here and a year ago, I just can't imagine what the devil happened to 'Wrigglin' and 'Writhin' or whatever that darn column was called. I liked it. Whahopen?

While on the subject of columns I note that practically all columns and features have been excluded in a year. Seems to be the trend nowadays. Here's a slap on the back for Howard Brown, who went up to the front office and told those guys down at Ziff-Davis to consent to a revival of the letter column in one or two of his mags. I think you should adopt the same policy. So what if it's inexpedient. No matter if the boss gets mad when the furniture starts

flying...you've got backing—how 'bout all your readers and your 60 reliable, old-stand-by letter-writers? But above all—remember—money means nothing; loathe will find a way...

Other noticeable improvements and backward progressions... Decrease of two pages of ads. Proves conclusively that mag is becoming smaller. Tak, tak. What's more they were electronic, I-can-put-you-in-business ads, too. Now, all I can find are snide impersonal ads like Drunk?; Wanna Get Off the Smoking Habit? Famous Physician Tells How; Wanna Get Off the STF Habit? Famous Psychiatrist Tells How; and Girls, Wanna Get Your Man—Write to etc., etc. After all, I'm kind of particular about what kind of advertisements my letter is sandwiched between. Stick me next to a "Ruptured?" Bob, and I'll scream "Indecency" loud and long with my grit-ringed communication orifice.

Next on the agenda are the only remaining features. Your editorial and the letters section. It looks to me as if both of these are somewhat conflicting, and every time you decide to sound off with a nice lengthy editorial, we don't even hear from a mere 5 of the "loyal fifty." This is a terrible situation, since I like both kinds of ramblings. So many other editors use their editorials—which are usually nothing more than half-page affairs—for no other purpose than to slap themselves on the back and say, "Gee what a great magazine I'm editing" and "Gosh, subs are only \$4 together with the names and ward numbers of two of your friends" or "Next ish we will have Derfla Gridban who threatens to make that issue even worse than this one," etc., etc. While this kind of editorial can only be classified as a vestigial hangover and needless formality, I am happy to see that one of the meatiest portions of SFQ is "It Says Here" (an outdated name, by the way). Your editorials are long, and you really and truly say something to express your views; but unfortunately it is to the severe detriment of your letter column (which should be separately titled "It Says Here"). Either lengthen the mag (a probably improbable solution) or cut the editorials and increase the letters until a proportionate balance is reached. Other matters have been infringing on the column too much and the only way it can reach the medley of elements you want (the boredom-blasting battleground) is to make it a bigger ground as well. As the best feature in SFQ it should be given a little room to expand and grow. For this reason, I am in favor of the originals awards—they give a little incentive to start or keep writing in, and it costs you nothing to start the system going again.... That wraps up all my serious thoughts for another year.

If this is printed, I'd like to make a request for correspondents and (personal note) John G., wherever you are—put away that sun-tan lotion and drop me a line...

[Turn To Page 86]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

That tears it 'til next November (slap me next to a good luck charm, an' I'll be back in a flash)

—WARREN F. LINK,
1123 Cumberland Road,
Arlington, Penna.

You're right, of course; "It Says Here" should be the letter department, and the editor should be only master of ceremonies. Right now, I'm splitting the editorial off into a separate niche. I do think, though, that you may be judging Emsh and our "slap-dash" requirements for artwork a bit harshly. We want (and I'm sure Emsh wants to deliver) as good a picture as he can do for the particular situation, every time. But no one is going to turn out their very best work all the time. This is no excuse for poor work, but it is an explanation for the fact that often a "top" artist will appear with a drawing which is "good," but no more.

CONFUSED—BUT NOT FOR LONG

Dear Editor:

Look, I was just about to start out saying that was a lousy cover you have on the February SFQ and then I remembered something—it made me buy the book. I've seen it before on the stands, even picked up a copy now and then, but this one had such an awful cover I just couldn't put it down. Sounds crazy doesn't it. I looked at it, started to turn away, then turned back and picked it up just to see if it looked as bad inside as it did out. Nope—the inside looked real neat and attractive, and before I could stop myself I plunked a quarter down onto the counter and walked off with my first issue.

Dammit all, I'm confused now. Does this mean that vulgar covers (well, at least garnish and not very well done) really sell your book? That's hard to swallow and while I've just admitted that it sold me, I don't want to be attracted that way again. I want to see a cover that doesn't look like a slightly glorified comic book. Oh, I don't care what other people think if and when they see me with SFQ in front of my face, because I read a lot of it on the way to and from work. Nope, I want a cover that I can enjoy looking at after I've read the stories and departments and everything else except the ads—and maybe some of the ads if they look interesting.

The lead novel was real nice and had an interesting idea behind it; good fast-moving story and I liked the way that the hero did things the simplest and least heroic way when the big pinch came. Sort of too bad that the gal had to get killed off, but it was logical enough.

That "Fission of Mrs. Custer" was a lulu; I've read it three times and I still get a laugh out of it. By all means keep giving

[Turn To Page 88]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

us a humorous story whenever you get a good one—one as good as this, at any rate, though I wouldn't want to see more than one in an issue. One thing I like about this book is that every story is different—I mean they're not all the same kind of story, like you find in some magazines.

"Inside Science Fiction" didn't make too much sense to me, but your columnist writes well and it does sound sort of interesting. Just keep it short as it is now and I won't complain about it.

"Possession" had a humorous touch to it that I liked, but I wouldn't call it a straight funny tale like the Marks yarn. Sort of ironic and a light touch of satire. And while the ending was predictable, like they say in detective stories (once you have all the clues before you, you can spot the murderer if you're clever enough) I didn't catch it. Fine.

The article was very interesting and the author has a way of making me feel I've read the stories he's talking about, even though I haven't. I'd like to see more of this kind of article—I mean one in every issue but not two or three each time.

I think the second picture for "Giant in the Forest" gave a little too much away because, although I didn't guess that the people were mechanical toys, the revelation didn't come as too much of a surprise to me. I figured maybe they were some kind of pets, although I couldn't see any connection between them and the giant child.

Book reviews, when they're as well done as the ones you have here, are always interesting. Again—I'd like to see some each time, but not at any more length than you have here.

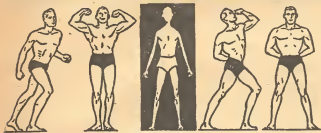
"The Adventurers" was a nice little short-short. All in all, the last two stories weren't as good as the first three, but they weren't at all bad.

Got a good laugh out of the editorial takeoff on the "Mad Tea Party." So that's what editors run up against, huh? Just goes to show that the other man's job isn't anywhere near as soft as it looks from the outside. But I didn't get a laugh out of Mr. Harold Miller's letter. If a fellow wants to doubt whether a rocket would work out in space, okay let him doubt it. But if he's going to waste my time trying to prove it just by tossing words around, then I'm not going to feel so tolerant about his views. Please don't publish any more such drivel unless someone writes in and says he conducted an experiment with a rocket in a vacuum, and gives all the details on how he set it up, etc., and then concludes, "It won't work because I ran so many tests, and it didn't—there's nothing out there for it to push against."

Well, if the inside of your next issue is as good as this one was, then I won't have any

[Turn To Page 90]

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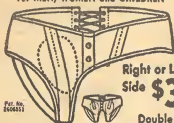
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

kicks—but I sure hope that the next cover is a lot better!

—JAMES PARTRIDGE,
Queens Village N. Y.

Sorry about that illustration; will try not to repeat offense. Is this present cover more to your liking?

ONE READER'S BIAS

Dear Sir:

Your editorial in Nov. SFQ was very interesting, and enlightening to some degree, as to the inner workings of an editor's mind. I always wondered how they worked, or what made them tick. You have revealed a little.

This letter is only a few remarks from one reader's viewpoint and his biases (is that the correct plural of bias? I ought to look it up.)

One of my biases as a reader amounts to almost a prejudice. That is, all stories that take up much time or wordage with liquor drinking or drunkenness are utterly worthless. Any story where such as that starts early in the story tempts me to drop reading it at once because of the fact that invariably any story in which liquor looms up to any extent will be, and always has been, a very poor and uninteresting story. And I naturally feel sure it is a liquor drinking and drunkard type of editor who thinks this type of story will go over good. Well, it may be or it may not, I would not say, but, probably the drunkards are not in the majority as readers of science fiction. (Please don't classify me as the Puritanical type, or a W.C.T.U. fanatic, either—or M.C.T.U.)

You have not mentioned in your editorial the principle bias of editors, which is the alleged reputé, or reputation, of an author. If a writer has achieved a reputation, an editor will accept a very poor story from him.

And I notice that almost all writers, no matter how good they usually are, will sometimes write stories with little or no interest in them. For instance, even Murray Leinster, whom I consider one of the best, will have, once in a while, a most mediocre or poor story, and vice versa, Ray Bradbury will have a very good story published once in a blue moon, as it were.

And on this vice versa side, take L. Sprague de Camp; he has an excellent article "The Elder Profession," in this issue. I have always classed Sprague de Camp as a twin brother with Lester del Rey in thought-processes, or their expression let us say, as materialistic cynics. In my humble opinion, the biggest fool, or practical idiot, is the one who will knock and speak cynically of the beliefs of other people, especially where these beliefs are concerned with spiritual things, or things beyond our five senses, our scientific instru-

[Turn To Page 92]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

ments, and knowledge. For millions of
years, mankind was totally unaware of the
waves that permeate the ether and which
are now picked up and turned into voice,
music and pictures by the radio and tele-
vision. It was probably true that there were
keen, intuitive, and spiritually-minded men
or women, away back, who imagined there
might be something permeating everything
that might be received if only they would
find a way to do it. But it sure was never
a del Rey type of individual who would im-
agine any such thing. He would only pooh-
pooh and ridicule all who did.

So today, it is also the intuitive, the man
or woman who believes and imagines that
such things are possible and probable which
have not, as yet, been thought of. And why
does one read or write science fiction, pray
tell, unless they have some real belief in
what seems utterly impossible (magic, as
it were, or miracles) now?

S. F. CARY, Gen'l Delivery,
Atlanta, Ga.

To twist the old saying a bit, "One swal-
low doesn't make a drunkard." There's no
doubt that imbibing intoxicants regularly
always contains the risk of the individual's
becoming an alcoholic—but it has been
pretty well established by now that habitual
drunkenness is a symptom of illness. This
editor enjoys various alcoholic mixtures
now and then, but a preponderant diet of
booze is as unattractive to me in a story
as it would be in real life.

Look, you say you consider Murray Lein-
ster one of the best; now doesn't that mean
that he is a "name" writer with you? That
you are very likely to buy a magazine that
has one of his stories in it—and in some
cases perhaps an issue you would pass up
otherwise? Again, haven't you found that,
outside of a few which disappointed you,
his stories varied in quality—that is, while
most of them were of a high level from
your viewpoint, some were not much more
than just enjoyable? Well, an editor is a
reader, too. For the most part, he picks
stories he enjoyed reading within the re-
quirements of the magazine's policy. Some-
times an editor has an off-day, wherein he
selects stories that make him tear his hair
upon a second reading; sometimes his lik-
ing for an author will lead him to see merit
in a story where hardly any other readers
can see it. But it is very rare that a story
will be purchased—regardless of the au-
thor's name—which the editor considered
poor at the time he bought it; and when
this happens, it is nearly always cases of
interference from superior officers in the
establishment.

The "scientific attitude" has to be tough
and often seemingly "cynical"; reduced to
its simplest terms, it is—nothing is true
unless it can be proven. The evidence has
to be available, so it can be subjected to
tests and measurements; and the experi-
ments must be outlined, and formulated so

IT SAYS HERE

they can be repeated by others. If it's a case of "natural" phenomenon, then its occurrence must be subject to accurate prediction. Many "beliefs," which depend entirely upon faith, cannot fulfill such criteria; or perhaps it would be fairer to say that, so far, they have not. Millions of people believed the earth to be flat for centuries; the belief didn't make it so, but there were sensible-sounding arguments. Others believed it to be round, during the time that the flat earth was "common knowledge". But "scientists" couldn't accept the "round earth" theory until the evidence and phenomena left no doubt about the matter—that is, until experiment and repeated demonstrations indicated that the theory of a globe-like planet was the only one which accounted for all the evidence.

One can be tolerant about other persons' beliefs provided these do not lead to dangerous actions, or that persons holding the beliefs do not try to force them upon non-believers.

OBJECTION SUSTAINED

Dear RWL:

While I'm glad to see Knight with us again, I'm not so happy to see a work like Sprague de Camp's "Lost Continents" dismissed with a facial tic, as it were.

But perhaps I'm blaming the wrong person. Certainly Damon isn't required to find the subject interesting. So, regretfully, Mr. Editor, I must say: Fie on you for passing this off as a review instead of getting a treatment, favorable or otherwise, which at least assumed that the book was worth talking about at some length.

How about atoning for this peccadillo by running a more representative review in a coming issue?

—MURRAY KING, Greenwich, Conn.

I agree with bowed head. Will gladly atone thus if someone wants to send me such a review. While I've read most of "Lost Continents", and found it fascinating, I don't know enough about the subject to write a review myself. Sure, I could say I liked it; but a work of this nature requires evaluation from wide knowledge of the subject; I have no way of knowing how right or how wrong Sprague may be at any given point, or of the over-all accuracy of his statements and comments; thus my comment would have no weight.

MISCONCEPTION PARADE

Dear Bob:

I keep telling myself that it is absolutely futile to attempt to reason with characters like Harold W. Miller—the man who sets out to "astound" us readers of the February 1955 SFQ with a parade of the weariest and stalest of physical misconceptions—but there's always the chance that somebody unable to tell a positive tone from the ac-

[Turn Page]



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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

tual possession of some information might be taken in, so I keep trying.

(1) Mr. Miller says that "rocket-driven spacecraft can never travel through space, as we know it!" The fact of the matter is that one already has. The Navy Aerobee which attained an altitude of 250 miles several years ago was travelling in a space emptier than the inside of a vacuum tube.

(2) Rockets, says Mr. Miller, move "by exhaust gasses thrusting against an atmosphere." No, they don't. They move by virtue of Newton's Third Law of Motion, which says that every action must have an equal and opposite reaction. The law holds in a vacuum, as well as in an atmosphere; test-firings of guns in evacuated chambers have shown this to be true. (As have recent rocket flights.)

(3) Mr. Miller wants to know who can prove that the Earth has gravity. I would suggest that he climb to the top of a tall building and step off it. The experiment should prove permanently convincing... though I wonder: I picture Mr. Miller as a man who falls down a lot.

(4) Mr. Miller states that it is highly improbable that any of the other planets have any gravity of their own. This is a neat notion; among other things, it indicates that there are no such planets as Neptune and Pluto, both of which were discovered through their gravitational influences on neighboring bodies. Wouldn't Adams, Leverrier, Lowell and Tombaugh be surprised!

(5) Mr. Miller wants us to "accept" Science's word on the speed of light," and then, "by mathematical procedure, we arrive at the fantastic speed of 5,865,696,000,000 MPH, or one light year!" Just goes to show you what a dangerous tool math can be in the hands of children. A light-year is not a speed; it is a distance. The speed of light in miles per hour is 669, 600, 000 mph. Mr. Miller's figure appears to be of the right order of magnitude for the number of miles travelled by light in a year—but nobody will be more surprised than Mr. Miller.

I am curious to know why an editor would find such an obvious piece of cracked pottery attractive for a letter column. Any controversy it might start would surely be foredoomed, since people like Mr. Miller seldom care to contaminate their notions with dirty old library research on the points at issue.

—JIM BLISH, PO Box 241, Milford, Pike Co, Pennsylvania

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[Turn To Page 96]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

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ASTOUNDED

Dear Robert:

I was astounded when I read Mr. (from his letter, I'm certain he's not that old) Harold W. Miller's letter, which you were unkind enough to title "Spacecraft Speculation, etc." I say unkind, because I thought I was about to read an intelligent thesis on spacecraft; however, I was soon submerged in a ridiculous something-or-other about rockets "pushing" against air, etc. I was under the impression that there wasn't anybody left in the whole-wide-world that didn't know that rockets work on Sir Isaac Newton's principle of "opposite and equal reactions". I'm entirely too weak to explain it all now, but I suggest that he look it up in a science book, if he has one.

I'm engrossed in his comments about the Bible and his mention of man's lifespan to be "three-score and ten" (70 year). For one thing, this is only meant to act as an average, and not meant to mean that no one exceeds this sum. We have in *Genesis* 6, 3 the following bit on lifespan: "...and his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." This is also meant to be an average, since, on rare occasions, people have lived more than 120 years. The sad fact is that too many people have gotten an urge to read the Bible, and don't have the ability to understand its meaning and place in the world of reality.

For one thing, the Bible isn't meant to be a science book! Too many people seem to think that the Bible is, and therefore go about taking the story of creation to be the literal truth, when, in reality, it's meant to be figurative, etc. The Bible isn't meant to tell people how to make "jiffy-atomic disintegrators"; if it were, it already would have; the Bible is a book that sets forth a code of life, a way of living, just as the



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teachings of Confucius did. Of course, the Bible makes its code Divine in origin.

I think the reason that religion has a bad name among many intelligent people is because of fanatics who try and prove everything by it. The Bible *won't* tell you how to make a controlled atomic reactor; the Bible *won't* tell you how to build a rocket fuel that will get you to the moon without a space-station. The Bible *will* tell you how to get to heaven; the Bible *will* give you the teachings of Christ, the apostles, etc.; the Bible *will* tell you how the world was made, in a figurative sense, *only*.

Somehow, I think my letter degenerated into something as insensible as that which I am trying to refute.

As for gravity, and the sun being the only body that has it, I think that even the noble Mr. Miller couldn't mean that. My dear friends, what holds the moon in its orbit? And don't say the gravity of the sun, because the moon doesn't revolve around the sun (at least not primarily) but around the earth.

I can't help it, I *STILL* think this was a hoax! NOBODY could really think those thoughts. I think I even detect a bit of Stewart humor (?) here. I wonder.

I was under the impression that SFQ was

no more. Mine good friend Cal Beck tells me so in a recent letter. (I won't guarantee that we'll still be on speaking terms, even, when you get this, since I have a way with people...)

—GILBERT E. MENICUCCI, 675 Delano Avenue, San Francisco 12, California

So, now you know: there are still people who do not know the howcome of rockets in space. We can arbitrarily divide these up into two groups (a) those who can't be taught because they already know that rockets won't operate in nothing, and nobody's going to tell them different (b) those who are accessible to being taught and shown.

Our correspondent sounds like a member of the first group; if so, then argument with him is useless. However, at any given month there may be a number of members of group b, who pick up their first issue of a science-fiction magazine. No harm is done in hashing the question out once in awhile, though we can't run it on our masthead, of course.



LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE FICTION

(Continued From Page 48)

I suspect that the reason for this attitude lies in assumptions drawn from a close look at the examples to hand in the past quarter-century. Are there grounds for such an assumption within the general practice of science-fiction writing?

I think there is at least one: many, if not most, science fiction writers are either young men, or men who have started out in writing for the science fiction market. Without considering the limitations imposed by the requirements of popular fiction, there are two elements in the making of significant fiction (fiction which adds to our knowledge or understanding of human nature) which we must consider here. One is skill in writing; the other is a sizeable fund of knowledge and understanding of human nature (human behaviour would be a better term) on the part of the writer. The one requires talent and practice; the other requires a great deal of first-hand and vicarious experience in living and knowing human beings. This is obtained partly through a wide range of human contact and first-hand experience, and partly through study. The first-hand experience will assist in achieving verisimilitude in portraying fictional characters, but this alone will not necessarily give the author the necessary breadth of understanding to interpret and explore human behaviour in significant writing. Study of history, philosophy,

science, etc., must be added to a wide range of first-hand experience before the author has anything to "say."

Outside of the occasional "natural genius" no writer in his teens, or twenties, etc., with a background of school, plus intense reading of science fiction magazines, and perhaps a splurge of fan activity, has anything to say. (I'm putting this dogmatically in order to stress the point, and am ready to qualify that seemingly absolute "no writer" once the general point is established.)

To sum it up, while the *Times* writer may have overstated the case, I think he is correct in a way. Science fiction hasn't added very much to our knowledge or understanding of human nature, and its general practice is such that few significant works are likely to come from the field. It isn't the "literature of the future" any more than jazz is the "music of the future;" the limitations in practice are a part of the field.

But true "masterworks" have usually been created by men who burst the limitations of the field in which they were working; there's no reason why this could not, positively could not happen in science fiction.

All of this should not, for an instant, mar our enjoyment of a rousing good story. RWL



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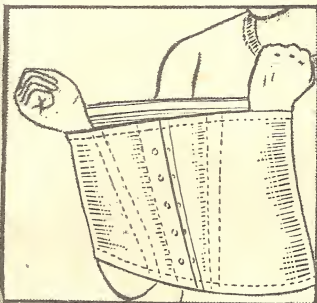
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